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AUSTRALIA'S CINEMATIC TREASURES

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PAUL COX REVEALS ALL

APPLAUDING KERRY FOX

MINDSET: TERROR

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NEWS, VIEWS, AND MORE NEWS, ETC

AFI AMENDS AWARDS

The AFI Awards Advisory Committee has recently recommended a number of changes for the **1998 AFI Awards**. These include

- the acceptance of video originated features and shorts. Features still need to be made with theatrical release in mind, and submitted on 16mm or 35mm,
- the Best Television Documentary and Best Documentary Film awards will be replaced with Best Documentary and Best Achievement in Direction of a Documentary. Thus, the distinction between television and theatrical documentaries will be done away with;
- the Television Drama Series and Serials awards requirements have been changed. For drama series, between 8 and 40 hours of television must be produced to be eligible (it was previously 8–60), and, for drama serials, more than 40 hours of television must be produced (previously that was more than 60). It's hoped that this will include a wider range of eligible drama; and
- production designers may now vote for Best Achievement in Cinematography and cinematographers may now vote for Best Achievement in Production Design, given the close working relationship inherent in these positions.

FURTHER FUNDING FOR FIRST-TIMERS

The New South Wales Government has announced its latest round of **Young Filmmaker Fund** recipients. Nine applicants were successful and will share $198 000 between them. The fund is administered by the **NSW Film & Television Office**, and the recipients and their short films are

- Tor Larsen and Mimi Ivey, for *War Story* ($25,000),
- Andrew Murray and Carolyn Johnson, for the comedy *Gristle* ($25,000 for post production),
- Georgina Wilson, for the comedy *Hoppin' Mad* ($25,000),
- James Rose and Patricia Dedal, for the animation *Never the Twine* ($17,875),
- Megan Harding and Roland Gillois, for *An Irishman Walks Into a Pub* ($25,000),
- Liz Farmer, for *Bumont* ($25,000),
- Paul Andrew, for the documentary *Man in the Irony Mask* ($25,000),
- Jacqui North, for the documentary *Positively Women* ($25 000), and
- Dean Wills, for *Sunchaser*, to be made specifically for the Internet ($5,000).

COVER
Alex Proyas, *Dark City*

BOYS GIVE A HAND AT BERLIN

Two début feature films from Australia were screened in Competition at this year's **Berlin International Film Festival**: **Rowan Woods'** *The Boys* and **Richard Flanagan's** *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*. The feature documentary *Pyongyang Diaries* by **Soiran Hoaas** was also selected for the Forum, and **John Conomos'** experimental short *Autumn Song* screened in the video festival concurrently held in Berlin by Transmedia. This is the first year that two Australian feature films have been selected for Competition.

IT'S BEEN THAT QUEER FILM TIME OF YEAR AGAIN

February and March were once again big months for gay and lesbian film lovers, with the **Mardi Gras Film Festival** in Sydney, and the **8th Annual Melbourne Queer Film and Video Festival**.

The Mardi Gras Film Festival screened at the Plit Centre from 11-22 February, and at the Roxy Parramatta from 12-15 February. The Festival premiered *kd lang – Live in Sydney*, a British documentary by Caz Gorham and Frances Dickenson on kd lang's 1996 "All You Can Eat" tour of Sydney, and featured films such as *It's in the Water* (Kelli Herd, 1997), *China Dolls* (Tony Ayres, 1997), the premiere of the first gay and lesbian sitcom, *Buck House*, to be screened on the Comedy Channel and on the Queer Vision website, and *Bent*, a film about homosexuals in Nazi concentration camps, directed by Sean Mathias, and starring Clive Owen, Lothaire Bluteau, Ian McKellan, Mick Jagger, Rupert Graves and Jude Law.

The Melbourne Queer Film and Video Festival, which ran from 20-29 March at the State Film Theatre, screened a mix of international and local documentaries and features, as well as the annual Queer Shorts competition. Features screened included *It's in the Water*, *Bent*, *Frisk* (Todd Verow, 1997) and *Slaves to the Underground* (Kristine Petersen), and documentaries *It's Our ABC*, *Too and Chained Girls*. Maude Davey, of *My Cunt* fame, has collaborated with filmmakers Deb Strutt and Liz Baulch for a new short film, *Elizabeth Taylor Sometimes*, which screened in the Queer Shorts section.

ENLARGED ATMOSPHERE

Melbourne's glorious **Astor Theatre** has announced the installation of a new screen, which will be one of the largest in the country.

The new screen will be curved, and will measure around 62 feet by 28 feet, 40 percent larger than the existing screen. As the installation will require the proscenium arch to be enlarged and some of the plaster moulding shifted further back, **John Allgood**, who was helpful in restoring **The Regent Theatre**, will be on hand to advise.

The installation of the new screen, along with new curtains, projection lenses and lamps and the removal of several rows of seats should all be completed by Easter, in time for the 70mm re-release of *Ben Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (William Wyler, 1959).

AWARDS TIME

Adelaide academic **Dr Ruth Vasey**, a lecturer of screen studies at Flinders University, has won the **1997 Kreszna-Krausz Moving Image book award for culture and history** with her book *The World According to Hollywood 1918-1939*. The book is an account of Hollywood's strategy of creating imaginary countries to avoid offending other nations and provoking censorship, and thus ensuring wider exposure and popularity. Vasey receives $24,000.

CINEMA AL FRESCO

While outdoor cinema has found a fashionable popularity in most capital cities during the summer

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Michael Helms edits *Fatal Visions*.

Peter Jackson is the New Zealand based director of *Heavenly Creatures* and *The Frighteners*.

Kevin Jahner is a projectionist.

Michael Kitson is a Melbourne writer on film.

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Adrian Rawlins is a poet-philosopher with a particular interest in Australian rock culture.

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Margaret Smith is a Sydney writer and director.

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Monica Zetlin is a producer's assistant and writer on film.

inbits

months, word down the bush telegraph from Central Victoria says that they've been doing it for years. Rural film buff **Bryan Dwyer** explains further.

As the house lights are dimmed in the cinema, the stars are coming out at Lake Eppalock Holiday Park in Central Victoria. Eppalock boasts one of the few outdoor cinemas in Australia. Campers can relax with a movie after a hard day of water skiing, cycling or bushwalking, and other customers come from Bendigo and the surrounding district especially for the show.

The cinema has operated seasonally since 1970. Park owners Bob and Shirley Murray and Neville and Rosalie Wirth, are delighted with the cinema as a holiday attraction. Bob Murray:

It's probably one of the last outdoor cinemas in Victoria to show current release movies in 35mm format.

The Cummings and Wilson projectors at Eppalock were made in Australia in the 1930s. They have the famous Raycophone sound system and use carbon arcs to generate light. "They're fantastic," says projectionist and cinema manager Daryl Evans. "They'll probably keep going for another 60 years."

Daryl worked as the projectionist here before taking over the cinema business three years ago. His partner Julie works in the box office. "And children Katharine, Alan and Rebecca lend a hand with cleaning. The family also runs a video product on business."

Admission is only $5, making it "affordable family entertainment." Family movies always do best at the box office," Julie says. The cinema is regularly packed with banana lounges and deck chairs. Campers often put their chairs in early to get the best positions, and come back at dusk for the show under the stars.

ABACUS BUYS AAV

South African company **Abacus Technology Holdings Limited** recently acquired leading Australian AAV electronic services group AAV Australia. Along with the brand name, Abacus has purchased AAV Australia and AAV New Zealand's video duplication, post production and corporate communication businesses, and will position them as one of the top global media services.

AAV Australia was bought from **John Fairfax Holdings Limited**, which had decided to sell AAV to enable the predominantly print based group to focus its financial resources on core businesses. Fairfax will hold ownership of Brandwidth@Live, the online services division of AAV, as well as its land and buildings.

DFILM IS THE GO

Australian company **Dfilm Services** has won the visual effects contract for the new **Warner Bros** feature, *The Matrix*, shot in Sydney and starring **Keanu Reeves**.

Dfilm first worked with *Matrix* producer **Andrew Mason** last year on the feature *Dark City*, directed by Alex Proyas. That proved to be the largest effects contract seen in Australia. It is encouraging to know that the expertise is being acknowledged by the large American studios.

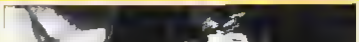
WILL THEY PLEASE MAKE UP THEIR MIND?

The **Classification Review Board**, as part of the Office of Film and Literature Classification, has overturned its 1997 decision to maintain the R classification for Pier Paolo Pasolini's *Salo o le 120 Giornate di Sodome (Salo – The 120 Days of Sodom)*, and the film has once again been banned in Australia. The review was instigated by a formal application for reclassification by Federal Attorney General **Daryl Williams** at the request of Queensland Attorney General **Denver Beanland**.

First banned here in 1977, *Salo* won a reprieve from the **Film and Literature Board of Review** in 1994, but this further development has given **Rebecca Huntley** from **Watch on Censorship** cause to wonder about the Federal

TOP10 [illegible]

Remakes and adaptations are fast becoming a staple in '90s filmmaking, often with very unlikely results. With Alfonso Cuaron's modern version of *Great Expectations*, featuring Ethan Hawke and Gwyneth Paltrow, and Nora Ephron's *You Have E-mail*, a remake of Lubitsch's *The Shop Around the Corner* starring Tom Hanks and Meg Ryan, we came up with ten unlikely, inappropriate and unnecessary remakes and adaptations.



1. **Rebecca** Starring Rupert Everett, Jude Law and Kristin Scott Thomas. Directed by Peter Greenaway.

Greenaway directs this remake with a definite '90s twist. Everett plays Maxim de Winter, who falls in love with the young and naïve Law (in the nameless heroine role made famous by Joan Fontaine), and marries him. But Law finds Danvers (Scott Thomas) a handful, especially when she shows him Mrs de Winter's whip and leather collection. The nasty secret comes out that Maxim married Rebecca to hide his true sexuality, and that Danvers and Rebecca were not so secret lovers.

2. **Waiting for Godot** Starring Jim Carrey and Adam Sandler. Directed by Ivan Reitman.

Only Reitman would dare bring this play to film with this cast. Whilst waiting for Mr Godot, Carrey and Sandler exchange funny faces and smutty jokes, fill in the time.

3. **Bringing Up Baby** Starring Antonio Banderas and Jamie Lee Curtis. Directed by Beebe Kidron.

Not a terribly inspired remake, in fact it's just an updated version, complete with leopard. Needless to say Banderas can't quite match Grant, and, while Curtis puts in a sterling effort, she just doesn't have the same elegance that Hepburn had.

4. **Barbara Baynton's Bush Studies** Starring Pamela Rabe, Bill Hunter, Chris Haywood, Monica Maughan and Heather Mitchell. Directed by Samantha Lang.

While retaining the period of Baynton's short stories, Lang contemporizes them in this anthology feature. Opting for over-exposed sepia toned colour, the film's sold a little slow, but an important retelling of a neglected Australian woman writer.

5. **The Boat maker** Starring Kevin Costner, Brad Pitt, Chris O'Donnell, Matt Damon and Mary Elizabeth Mastrantonio. Directed by Kevin Costner.

Costner takes on the Bible story of Noah, and makes it an allegory for his pet theme: a post apocalypse world. The initial running time was 145 minutes, but soon after Costner released his director's cut, running to 210 minutes. Pitt, O'Donnell and Damon play Shem, Ham and Japheth. Rather than stopping with the landing of the ark, the film recounts Noah's family's efforts at resettling, including the famous scene where Noah's sons see their father drunk and naked (Costner just can't resist getting his gear off).

6. **Visitors from Another Time** Starring Billy Crystal and Danny de Vito. Directed by Steve Martin.

A remake of the very successful French slapstick farce, *Les Visiteurs* (Jean Marie Poiré, 1993, which Mel Brooks wanted to dub into English). Martin swaps medieval knights travelling to the present with pioneering pilgrim fathers marvelling at a brave new modern world. Unfortunately, the script by Steven Oedekerk misses the mark and it's just an embarrassing mess.

7. **The Canterbury Tales** Starring Sir John Gielgud, Julie Walters, Hugh Laurie, Richard E. Grant, Saffron Burrowes and Colin Meaney. Directed by Kenneth Branagh.

In this updated version of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*, a group of business executives are in a charter bus, travelling to Canterbury to see their favourite motivational speaker. Along the way, they swap stories. This is one of Branagh's better films (essentially because he's not in it), and is reminiscent of his *A Midwinter's Tale*.

8. **The Day the Earth Stood Still Again** Starring Jeff Goldblum and Elizabeth Perkins. Directed by Jan de Bont.

The classic 1950's sci-fi flick is dragged into the 21st century with Goldblum playing the benign alien in a paranoid world. De Bont cranks up the hysteria to global proportions, but does nothing to add anything to a perfectly good original. Another example of something that should have been left well alone.

9. **Mork and Mindy** Starring Pauly Shore and Alicia Silverstone. Directed by Tom Shadyac.

The 1980s sitcom is the latest television series to be turned into a film, and they really shouldn't have. Even cameos from Robin Williams and Pam Dawber cannot save this deadful film.

10. **Helen** Starring Uma Thurman (Helen of Troy), Adam Quinn (Paris), Arnold Schwarzenegger (Ulysses), Richard Gere (Agamemnon), Ian McKellan (Priam), Amanda Plummer (Cassandra), Matthew McConaughey (Achilles), Elle MacPherson (Aphrodite), Ursula Andress (Hera), Julia Ormond (Athene) and Ian Holm (Zeus). Directed by Anthony Minghella.

The star studded retelling of The Iliad, shot in 70mm and running for over four hours, is a rather overblown but satisfying epic, full of sumptuous costumes and serious acting.

inbits

Government's moralistic agenda, and the adverse effect this may have on our international reputation

According to Huntley, a committee member for Watch on Censorship, a group established by Sydney Film Festival director **Paul Byrne** in late 1996, there are now only three options left for *Solo* in Australia. The first is that an Attorney General once again requests reclassification, and given that the current system is geared in an anti-*Solo* direction, that appears unlikely. A second option would be if a film festival decided to screen *Solo*. Film festivals are exempt from the normal classification process, but a list of films intended to be screened must still be submitted to the Board, who can then call in and view any film they deem to be inappropriate and then deny its screening. The third option would be if a distributor chose to screen it as a re-release, in the same way of *Pink Flamingoes* (John Waters, 1972). But as Huntley points out, seeing that this usually involves excising the offending material, half the film would have to go in *Solo*'s case. Perhaps the only way to get to see *Solo* in the future will be to see it overseas.

WINNING IN THE WEST

As reported last issue, the **12th Annual WA Screen Awards** were held on 27 February at the Camelot Picture Gardens in Perth, and now we have the pleasure of announcing the winners:

Festival of Perth Award for Young Filmmaker of the Year
Daniel Habedank

Cinesure/Dry Shand Award for Best Direction
Cameron Hay, A Shared Affair

West Australian Newspapers Award for Best Writing
Sarah Smith, Imelda's Shoes

Channel Nine Award for Editing
Kate MacNamara/Christine Bray, Dusting Off Broome

Kodak Award for Cinematography
Alex McPhee, Kerosene
AVLA Award for Sound
Scott Montgomery/Lawrie Silvestrin, Last of the Nomads

X-Press Award for Original Music
Daniel Habedank, Musicool

Luna Cinemas Award for Art Direction
The Gift, Fire

Annie Murtagh-Monks Casting Award for Acting (Male)
Damian de Montemas, Apple Pie

Annie Murtagh-Monks Casting Award for Acting (Female)
Faith Clayton, Kerosene

Luna Cinemas Award for Short Drama
Kelvin Munro, Kerosene

West Australian Newspapers Award for Drama (over 20 mins)
Cameron Hay, A Shared Affair

Horwath Award for Television Commercial
Martin Wilson, Scitech, Maggots

Cinevex Award for Experimental
Gozde Hiedurmaz, Living Wall

Horwath Award for Corporate
CVA Film & Television, Changi Airport 7am

Metropolis Award for Music Video
Triple Eight Star productions, Anky Fremp

Family Planning Award for Education & Training
Howard Moses, No Problem, The Ship Can See Us

Dry Shand/Cinesure Award for Animation
Kalumunda Special Art, Carboholic Nightmare

Discovery Channel Award for Documentary
Paul Roberts/Des Kootji Raymond, Buffalo Legends

Stolichnaya Award for Best Overall
Kelvin Munro, Kerosene

Staying in the west, announced during the **Small Screen BIG PICTURE TV Conference** was three co-production deals for WA documentaries. Funding will come from **ScreenWest**, **Discovery Channel**, Canada, and the **ABC's Nature History Unit**.

The three successful projects are *Return to Eden* (Brian Beaton and Celia Tait), *The Dangerous Edge* (Marian Bartsch and Derek Longhurst), and *Cray Tales* (Sarah Rossetti and Kate Akerman).

APPOINTMENTS

Renowned artist and musician **Llaszlo Kiss** has joined **Digital Pictures** Sydney as a 3D Designer/Animator. Kiss is one of the most experienced animators in Europe and Asia, and has worked for clients such as Mattel, Visa, HBO, Warner, Sony and Peugeot.

The Australian Film Finance Corporation (FFC) has appointed **Madeleine Enfield** as its new Legal Manager in Sydney. Ms Enfield has worked as the Legal and Business Affairs Executive at **Beyond International**, and as the Policy Officer at the Affirmative Action Agency. Her key responsibility will be to contract projects approved for funding by the Board. Enfield replaces **Gillian Clyde**, who has taken a position with Disney in the UK.

The Australian Subscription Television and Radio Association (ASTRA) has appointed **Debra Richards** as Executive Director. Richards was formerly with the **Australian Broadcasting Authority**.

Paul Hannaford has joined AAV's highly awarded Digital Pictures visual effects team following a three-year stint with leading UK post house, Rushes. Hannaford is one of Europe's best known visual effects artists with many commercial credits to his name, including Stella Artois, BMW, Caffreys, Peugeot, Visa and Kodak. Still at AAV,

Peter Ritchie has joined **Digital Pictures** in the telecine department. With over seven years experience, Ritchie has worked on commercials, filmclips and documentaries. He joins internationally respected colourist and Head of Telecine, **Siggy Ferstl**.

MARK JOFFE'S
A LIFE IN FILM

Director Mark Joffe *(Spotswood, Cosi* and, more recently, *The Matchmaker)* talks about films that had some effect on his life.

My memory is not as good as it used to be, but certainly there are some outstanding movies when I was growing up and getting into the business as it were. But there's been a dearth of good films over the past 25 years. I remember way back when I saw **The Virgin Spring** [Ingmar Bergman, 1959]. I remember the images in that. I was about 10 or 12 years old, and they stuck with me. I saw it again, and realized what the film was. So, obviously, those are the sort of things that are sublimmal or subconscious, and they keep coming back.

I never watch movies to technically appraise them. I try to be as much a part of the general public as I can, by being entertained. I think that's the key to it.

It's a really abused word, entertainment, but certainly you can make it as dark and as black as you want to – any film or documentary – as long as it's entertaining in some way. It can be harrowing, it can be emotional, whatever.

What I consider to be my favourite films are probably not that different from other people's. In the modern era, **The Godfather** [Francis Ford Coppola, 1972] and **The Godfather Part II** [Francis Ford Coppola, 1974]. **The Godfather Part III** [Francis Ford Coppola, 1990] is just horrible, not horrible just disappointing. **Raging Bull** (Martin Scorsese, 1980). Scorsese very rarely does a bad film. I like **Alien** (Ridley Scott, 1979), a fantastic movie that is much better than all the other *Alien* films put together, a really wonderful thriller.

From a lighter point of view, I think some of those classic Tracey-Hepburn comedies are fabulous, very clever. A lot of Billy Wilder's films are very good.

Probably my favourite film is **The Sweet Smell of Success** [1960], the Burt Lancaster-Tony Curtis film directed by Alexander Mackendrick. That's a wonderful film; that snappy dialogue is really clever stuff. Everything about it is so proficient. It is beautifully directed, every aspect without the director saying: 'Hey, aren't we clever, aren't we stylish?", which a lot of modern movies do. They put in this bullshit to make you think, 'Oh, that's clever.' It has to be integral to the movie, and I think that some of these things are way too overt.

American films nowadays are so superficial and, when they try and put something more into it, it becomes pretentious. They don't even know it's pretentious, it's so overt. But you can't be too stupid for an American audience. A lot of the Americans are fine, it's just what the studios think an American audience will want: that everything needs to be spelt out. It is really affronting to anybody who's trying to make films properly.

Of Australian films, I love **Wake In Fright** [Ted Kotcheff, 1971] and I thought **Walkabout** [Nicolas Roeg, 1971] was a great movie. By coincidence, my producer [on *The Matchmaker*], Lucien Roeg, is Nicolas Roeg's son, and he's the young boy Luke in **Walkabout**. In fact, he looks exactly the same.

I like **'Breaker' Morant** [Bruce Beresford, 1979], and I think Judy Davis is sensational, but she's also a friend.

But recently – I'm not talking about Australian films – it's just so disappointing. Even when you see a half decent movie, and most of the good ones these days are half decent, you go, 'Oh, that's nice, for a change.'"

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Scene Stretching

by Dean Carey

This is the second in a regular series of articles dedicated to the director at work – with limited time, limited resources and perhaps limited experience working with their actors.

This time we will explore further side coaching techniques that will push the boundaries of your scene and create dynamic and explosive results fast.

"Scene Stretch" provides a great opportunity for both actor and director. It allows director the chance to explore the limits of the scene, to find moments, change and exactly what the scene might be capable of offering up. It gives the actor an experience they may not have had for some time: the chance to focus entirely on the other characters in the scene and the relationship they share, without having to be responsible for where the scene has to go. This is how it works.

There are five possible directions that can be offered to each actor at any moment during the rehearsal. When a direction is given, the actor with the previous line repeats the line again, this time incorporating the precise direction given. The directions are as follows:

1. "And again"

As explained in the previous issue of *Cinema Papers*, the line is repeated with the choice the actor has made clearer and sharper. Remember you can say "And again" a number of times if required. It simply allows the actor a chance to clarify the moment and sharpen its intent.

2. "Stronger choice"

The line is repeated, but this time the choice is amplified. That is, if the choice played was tentative, then intimidate *more*. If the choice was to humour, humour *more*, intrigue *more*, charm *more*, seduce *more*, etc. (Remember, stronger doesn't mean louder, nor it allow the actor to mistake energy for intention.)

3. "Different choice"

As above, but this time alter the choice completely. If the choice was to confront, try pleading, if attack, try pacifying. If to shock, try intriguing. It's like spinning a colour wheel, or a of a light – each choice sheds different rays of meaning. You might side coach "Different choice" three or four times and then hit upon a surprising choice or perhaps one that just sits perfectly between them. You'll find the blocking will begin to take care of itself.

4. "Deal with..."

Fill in whatever you feel is appropriate based on what you see happening in the scene – for example, deal with the fact she's not cooperating with you, deal with the fact he's walking out the door, deal with the fact he's avoiding your gaze, deal with the fact he's physically threatening you, etc. This direction will lead to detailed physical action – what some call "blocking" – and the characters will begin to respond physically motivated by the psychology.

5. "Contact"

When this is side coached it signifies a full five seconds of silence – no words, just pure direct eye contact. This means that the consequences of what has just been said will *demand* five seconds for both characters to digest its implication.

Each side coach is designed to release a specific dynamic in the scene and reveal its potential.

How do they work in a scene? Let's explore one.

Simple scenario: Character A is in the interrogation room after questioning. He has been left with a proposal to cooperate. A deal has been offered in return for information. Character B is about to enter. The dialogue is as follows:

Character B [*enters*]: I don't hold out much hope for you.

Character A: I wouldn't trust you as far as I could throw you.

Character B: More the fool you.

Character A: Why? Because I won't play your game? I'm not that stupid.

Character B: The choice is yours. [*Exits*.]

On the page it doesn't look like much, nor does it offer any significant leads as to how it should or could be played. If you sat and read it, it'd probably be pretty much one levelled and ☞ 41

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Festival du Court-Métrage, Clermont-Ferrand

by Paul Kalina

Discovering the Festival du Court Métrage, Clermont-Ferrand, is not unlike stumbling upon a secret society, though there's nothing even vaguely clandestine or élitist about this annual showcase for international short films in the Auvergne city of Clermont-Ferrand, otherwise known as the home of the Michelin tyre company: is a film festival of spectacularly humble proportions, particularly given the enormity of its scale and scope.

Now in its 20th year, the Festival turns over an audience of 115,000, who fill to capacity up to eight cinemas during eight days of continuous screenings. The Festival comprises an International competition (74 films in 1998), a French competition (68 films) – each has its own jury – as well as a handful of complementary exhibition programmes focusing on short film production.

To commemorate its 20th edition, this year's Festival included a large retrospective component: a 10-session retrospective of 20 years of French shorts, a five-session 'humour in shorts' strand (arrive at least one hour before any of these sessions to find a seat: such was the demand), screenings of films that have won the Prix du Public over the years, and more.

The Festival also supports a market attended by European cable operators and major film agencies. Including the Australian Film Commission, National film agencies hold screenings of short film programmes throughout the five days of the market, and inside the market venue are 20 viewing booths (which are in constant use throughout the five days), where participants can view any of the 2,000 French and international videos lodged there. In short, it's a highly industrious, busy and, according to market attendees, rewarding place for those in the business of buying, selling, programming, marketing or funding short films.

At the Festival proper, the serious business is the viewing of short films from every conceivable corner of the globe. There is a huge contingent of filmmakers present, and unlike other major international film festivals, where everyone appears to be swept along by the forces of media opportunities and distribution deals, the emphasis here is well and truly on films, filmmakers and how the audience receives them. Those nervous critters waiting at the door of the cinema are likely to be the filmmakers waiting to gauge the level of the clapping that follows the screening of every short – a ritual here. This is a Festival where filmmakers stand little chance of getting 'lost'. (The audience, too, it must be said, are the most gracious and generous this festivalgoer has ever encountered, applauding even a disappointing film.)

It's not only films that receive rousing applause at Clermont-Ferrand. The opening night ceremony began with an impassioned speech from trade union representatives asking the audience to support their actions as the showdown to the French Government's introduction of the 35-hour week loomed, the Government's controversial proposal to deal with France's crippling 12 percent unemployment. "I'm not a cineaste", the spokesman said. "I'm an individual who cares about the world I live in." He received a standing ovation, which not even the screening of *Norman McLaren's Opening Speech* (1961) or the sublime *Renaissance* (1963) by Walerian Borowczyk ten minutes later would come close to matching. That speech, its setting and the response it elicited were frightening reminders of the depths of censorship (and self-censorship) into which Australian culture has fallen in recent times.

It's no surprise to learn that the Festival's roots are in the still strong, in France at least, Ciné Club (or film society) movement. The Festival is managed by

the aptly named Sauve Qui Peut committee comprising the original film society members who invited the late, great Jacques Tati to the Festival during its second year. On that occasion the ageing Tati inspired a group of university animators to rediscover a lost world – that of short films. True to the spirit of Tati, the Festival professes an aversion to the ideological bent of some short and 'alternative' film festivals, selecting films on the premise of artistic expression and merit.

Nineteen years later, Clermont Ferrand is certainly an unforgettable reminder of that area of filmmaking usually overshadowed by the production of features (but, let's not forget, enjoying something of a renaissance with the opening out of markets for such fare).

Most illuminating for a visitor from Australian shores is the sheer quality of the films on show. Whilst the majority of films in competition, both French and international, are shot and screened in pristine 35mm Dolby prints with production values to match up scale features, the professionalism of the productions is awe-inspiring. Fictional drama running to 15-20 minutes is the norm, while the 3-5 minute gag film (Australian short filmmakers please take note) is all but completely off the agenda.

Perhaps by virtue of the number of French shorts at Clermont Ferrand, it is hard to not conclude that the French are currently leading the way in short film production. The range of subject matters – from intimate relationship dramas to socially relevant issue films – and styles was inspiring. One would really have to be unlucky to not come away from a session with lasting memories of least some shorts.

Inspiring, too, was the tendency of those films to fully engage with the short film format, to execute works capable of dealing with the exigencies of short-form drama, in terms of narrative, character, conflict, resolution, etc.

At the other extreme were films such as *Dag 1* (Hans Joachim Ronning, Espen Sandberg, from Norway) or *Die Letzte Sekunde* (Tim Trageser, Germany) which resembled excerpts from a feature film rather than a self-contained short.

Four Australian shorts screened in competition. Donna Swan's *Skud*, David Lowe's *The Two-Wheeled Time Machine*, bringing AFTRS student Lowe to the Clermont competition for the second year in a row after last year's *Freestyle*, Cameron Hay's *A Shared Affair* and Kriv Stenders' *Two/Out* (Stenders is best known for the documentary *Motherland*.)

Another Australian short, David Swann's *Bonzo*, screened in the Humour retrospective, having originally screened in the 1990 competition.

Entirely missing from this selection, and in this writer's opinion not a bad thing, was even a hint of the local


La Reforma Suedoise

predilection for gag films. In their place were thoughtfully conceived short formal dramas covering an emotional spectrum from sentimentality to nihilism.

David Lowe's *The Two Wheeled Time Machine* is a sentimental and ultimately wistful drama of a young man who discovers a way of staying young forever, but has to face the tragedy of enduring this life without the company of his childhood love. It's an ambitious and demanding drama – incorporating within its 20 minute running time a range of period settings, a character depicted at successive ages and, in the context, some innexpected special effects – but one that Lowe deals very effectively with, particularly the latter scenes of resolution.

Cameron Hay's *A Shared Affair* was a pleasant surprise at a number of levels. Hay, a journalist originally from West Australia, was posted in Japan when he made this film. Hay claims to have taught himself the basics of filmmaking, and is the first to acknowledge the contribution his editor L. Silvestrin, made toward his début film. Hay's film centres on a married couple who hope to relieve their seven year itch by each finding a lover. Despite the occasional lapse into mores you'd expect to find in a 70s ocker sex comedy, the film's depictions of a heterosexual couple and its stylistic freshness is a million miles away from the self-conscious genre bending and anguished sexual politics that prevails amongst many Australian short films.

Kriv Stenders' *Two/Out* is a tough and confronting prison drama in which the relationship between two hardcore convicts, Jack and Tom, is tested when Jack begins to fantasize that a black plastic bag, which he nurses in his bed, is his 'woman'. Confined to a single, claustrophobic set with chillingly authentic performances by Richard Green (Jack) and Tony Ryan (Tom), neither of whom are professional actors, Stenders' film is a harrowing and disquieting viewing experience. It revisits the terrain of violent men, their dysfunctional relationships with women and the merciless anguish of Australian masculine culture, but we've been here before (think of *Stir*, *Everynight... Everynight*, *Ghosts... of the Civil Dead*). Technique helps distinguish this film from many of its predecessors, Stenders shooting the film in 35mm anamorphic and utilizing elegant dissolves to convey the agonizing physical distress of the two main characters.

Donna Swan's *Skud*, which has already enjoyed considerable exposure locally, is a disturbing story of kids walking a fine line between survival, despair and annihilation in a style reminiscent in tone of Ana Kokkinos' *Only the Brave*.

None of the Australian films picked up a prize, though it must be said that in this company being selected and screened is a reward in itself. The Prix du Public went to Spaniard Alber Ponte's *El Origin del Problema*, a witty parable of corruption and moral principles told through the relationship between a salesman and an honest customer. The Grand Prix was won by *Les Mots Magiques*, by Canadian Jean Marc Vallée.

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First and foremost, the pulse of Clermont-Ferrand is felt in those films whose energy derives from a filmmakers' personal expression, one that thrives unencumbered by the baggage that is an inevitable part of the feature film industry.

Malka Lev Adom, by Israeli writer-director team Etgar Keret and Ran Tal, is a disarming knock out. A young man realizes that his girlfriend is involved with another man, but – having had her name tattooed on his arm, he must decide between succumbing to a world without love, which the rest of his friends seem to have done, or to love another woman with the same name. The film certainly has some rough edges and its sexual crudeness – though well justified, may limit its exposure on the local festival circuit, but it's the sharpness of the writing and weight given to its seemingly "feelgood" premise that lends this film its startling edge.

That some of the press found Benoît Mariage's *Le Signaleur* overly saccharine and cute won't matter a bit given the enormous appeal that this stunningly photographed absurdist comedy appears to have on its audience. A couple of shonky bicycle race organizers recruit a near senile man to stop traffic on a remote lane in the countryside, assuming that nothing can go wrong with so simple a task. There's an unmistakeable fuzzy-warm humanism to this film, but the astute timing of the build up to the climax – we know it won't work out as planned, and the permutations of disaster are as exciting as they are unexpected – is brilliantly executed.

One of the standout films in the French competition was *Chapeau Bas* (Hervé Loach), whose title, crudely translated as 'lowered hat', refers to the assumed shame of its protagonist, a lonely and self-centred old man whose sole preoccupations are a missing button on his shirt and the immigrant children running amok near his apartment. He is mistakenly identified as the rescuer of one of the neighbourhood boys – in fact, he passively stood by watching as the boy came close to drowning in a river whilst a passing motorist stopped, resuscitated the boy and left. But the old man is understood to be the hero, and is generously welcomed into the boy's house where he is given another opportunity to prove his Good Samaritanism. Without passing judgement on any of the characters, the film beautifully details the old man's isolation from his community and self.

Le Château d'Eau (Christian Carion) would certainly find a receptive audience in Australia as the spin doctors continue to convince a doubtful public about the benefits of privatization and 'cost efficiencies' (it would probably cause a riot in Auckland). In this punchy and funny parable, a dotty 'old timer' engineer proves to be more than a management school trained mayor can deal with as he attempts to replace the old man with an automatic pump.

On the day – however, the vetted Grand Prix was awarded to *Ma place sur le Trottoir* (*My Place on the Pavement*, Philippe Pollet Villard), a comedy about an old prostitute and a benign salesman turned sex shop owner whose affairs in the sex trade are revealed to be utterly banal and mundane.

Other films worth keeping an eye open for, should they spring up at local film festivals or on SBS, include *The Sheep Thief* (Asif Kapadia), a haunting yet beautiful story of a street kid caught stealing a sheep and left to die, where his journey to salvation begins. The droll *Esposados* (Juan Carlos Fresnadillo) prills out every stop of the film noir genre as a mealy-mouthed, mincy man musters up the courage to be rid of his overbearing wife. Based on Max Aub's *Exemplary Crimes, Menos Nove* (Rita Nunes) is an inventive comedy in which a variety of ordinary people, in static close ups, unemotively detail the atrocities they have perpetuated against their fellow man for such 'crimes' as talking in the cinema, or for simply being better looking. According to Nunes' film, violence is a means of making one's way in today's world, but the bitter tragedy is underscored with deadpan comedy – or are these characters just not suited to this world?

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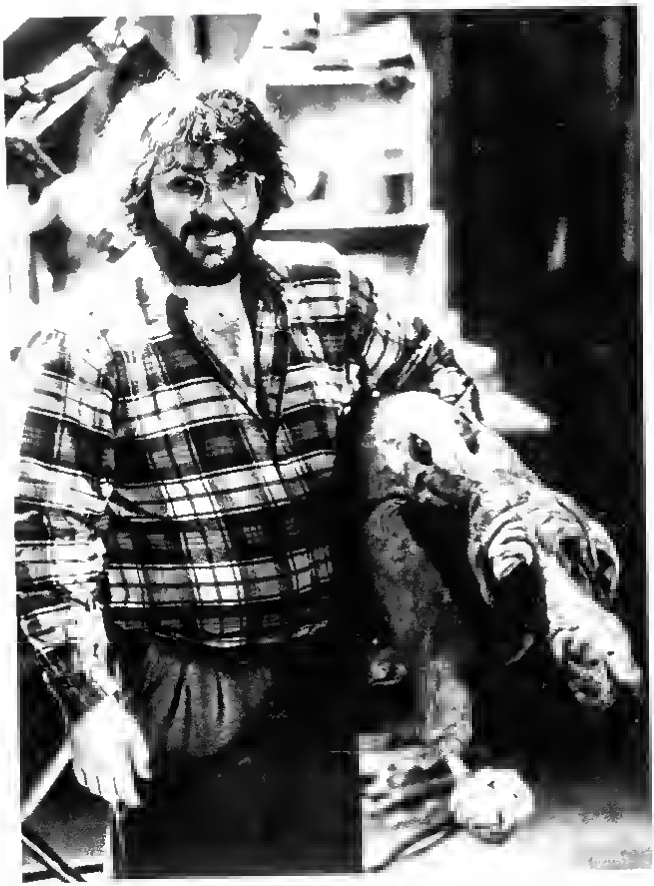
Peter Jackson's Horror Story

by Peter Jackson

There are many obvious parallels between the Australian and New Zealand film industries. Both have managed to produce an atypically high number of quality films given the small populations. Both have discovered and nurtured extremely talented craftspeople in all areas of filmmaking, only to see many lured away by Hollywood and elsewhere. Both exist only because there is significant government funding.

In late 1997, the New Zealand Film Commission celebrated its 20th anniversary. But in the expectedly celebratory atmosphere, not everyone was laudatory. Director Peter Jackson (*Heavenly Creatures*, *The Frighteners*) sent shock waves – literally – through the corridors of the NZFC and through the film industry with a letter published in an Auckland magazine, *Metro*.

Jackson's remarks are not only highly relevant to Australians because of the similarities and interconnected nature of the two industries, but because many of his most trenchant criticisms will strike many a chord in all government-sponsored industries.



Jackson: For 20 years our feature film industry has produced great movies. Great filmmakers, actors and technicians have emerged. Many of our movies have won awards and made money. And yet morale is at an all-time low.

The Australian and UK film industries are flourishing. These are exciting times for filmmakers in those countries. The world is applauding them as they produce original, stimulating pieces of cinema. And yet we are floundering in a sea of depression and inactivity.

The blame for this must sit squarely with the New Zealand Film Commission. Just as they are using this [25th] anniversary to congratulate themselves, they must also take responsibility for the mess we now find ourselves in. Individuals are not to blame and I'm sure everybody working for the NZFC is well intentioned, but over the last few years the organization has mutated into an inward-looking mini-bureaucracy that has failed to change and develop in line with the needs of New Zealand's filmmakers.

Policies and rules have certainly been changing at a fast pace, but too often the change occurs for negative reactive reasons. A bad policy in one year creates a problem in the following year, and another bad policy is designed to 'fix' it.

As well as this failure to actually support and capitalize on our industry's strengths in a positive way, this constant revisionism has created an almost farcical confusion within the industry. How many of us actually know what the NZFC's sale policy is? Or what their latest policy is regarding "evidence of marketing support"? Or what their latest policy is regarding their recoupment position? I don't, and I suspect that the NZFC doesn't know either. Remember the recent confusion over whether the NZFC controlled the "final cut".

Several recent applicants, myself included, have had the goalposts shifted between board meetings. What is acceptable in one meeting is not the next. This indecisive meandering is terribly soul destroying and makes you want to pack your bags and get the hell out of here.

Several recent applicants, myself included, have had the goalposts shifted between board meetings. What is acceptable in one meeting is not the next. This indecisive meandering is terribly soul destroying and makes you want to pack your bags and get the hell out of here.

As the gatekeepers of the sole funding source, the NZFC have largely escaped industry criticism because filmmakers are not prepared to risk their livelihoods by going public. Thus we have a government funded body which, for the most part, is not subject to criticism and not accountable to its client base. This is, by anybody's definition, a terrible state of affairs.

One of the biggest problems with the NZFC is film ignorance at board level. There is currently no requirement under the act for any board member to have experience in the film industry. Thus, over the years, the majority of board members reading scripts, making judgements about filmmakers and the viability of their projects have had little understanding of film making. Surely "film literacy" needs to be the number-one criteria for board membership? ☞ 42

Le Pordenone Giornate Del Cinema Muto

by Barrie Pattison

There was more danger of culture shock than of jet lag going from Australia to Italy's 16th Pordenone Silent Film Festival. One found oneself at the 1950s neighbourhood Cinema Verdi, packed with 1,200 admirers of movies that hadn't learned to talk, giving a rapturous response to material of the kind that in Australia might draw a dozen wander-ins, giggling.

In a couple of decades, the event has developed from a few enthusiasts grooving on the delights of their now-distant teenage filmgoing, between plates of seafood pasta, to a world centre of the not incon sequential restoration industry, drawing curators (in the real meaning of that much abused term), laboratory representatives, writers, publishers, booksellers, memorabilia dealers and video traders.

Kevin Brownlow plugged his restored *Birth of a Nation* (D. W. Griffith, 1915), with John Lanchberry's expansion of the original Carl Breil score. Brigitte Helm biographer, Peter de Herzog, fronted the 1928 *Abwege* (*Crisis*), which drew one time Pabst associate and veteran director Mario Monicelli to the screening. Distributor Ken Rive turned out to have been a child star in the last silents, to event director David Robin son's visible delight. Michael Pinschewer introduced his dad's pioneer ad movies. Ron Grant showed the half reelers he'd bought at an auction and restored as a private enterprise venture.

Animated conversations in four languages sur rounded one. Pordenone had a crowd who even gave spontaneous applause for a Kodak demonstration of combining early additive colour masters.

This didn't mean that there wasn't trouble in Paradise. The proposed demolition of the Verdi is likely to mean a major disruption, a departure from this historic, tourist friendly town. The headphone English and Italian simultaneous-translation system was shonky. Screenings were still free to all comers (Australian festivals and travel promoters take note?), but pay for live orchestra presentations were book-end ing it, and this temple to the celluloid image was sneaking video into its basement parallel showings, with bad sight lines and tiny screen.

The academics eyed the pros suspiciously and one veteran European attendee singled out the Chinese retrospective, which wasn't triggering his nostalgia mechanism, and muttered, "They should stick to their own hemisphere."

You can't see them all – Griffith

The films here not only came from exotic sources, but from decades whose attitudes often seemed to be our own, only to prove disconcertingly different. Familiar names and faces appeared in surprising contexts. These archival events are not like standard film festivals. The fate of the product being aired is already established. The sell may still be there, but it is harder to bluff your way with dodgy goods.

I noticed that even the most devoted were also dipping out on the Edison programmes. To hold an audience, these collections of one minute actualities from the 1890s (shown here too fast) needed either specialist knowledge or more careful documentation than was offered. Despite the extensive publications Pordenone turns out, their credit information is thin, and on material often at the far edge of known world cinema.

I also passed on another viewing of the Alberto Cavalcanti's after reminding myself, with the superior print of *En Rade*, that his work had great visuals and intriguing performers – here Catherine Hessling, Nathalie Lissenko and Thomy Bourdelle – but lacked the narrative drive to sustain attention. Similarly, the attractively restored and tinted copy of Harry O. Hoyt's 1925 *The Lost World* was still the lumbering novelty that it had been in cut-down black and white.

On the other hand, the tendency of recent years has been to try and tear down the status of David Wark Griffith as the father of serious film. Not Pordenone, who had named its weighty journal after him and was painstakingly wading through the Griffith output, starting with his rôles in one reelers from the pre teens.

It was a major regret that clashing time slots meant that I could only dip into this material, ropey and all as some of it was. Becoming a director seems to have been a wise career choice for Griffith, from the acting performances on show, but there was still the occasional jolt: seeing him in J. Searle Dawley's 1908 *Rescued from an Eagle's Nest*, familiar from murky copies in so many compilations and small gauge showings, suddenly sharp and correctly paced, made more impact that the screening of a couple of films Griffith had worked on before this acknowl edged debut.

One novelty I did catch was *The Christmas Burglars*, made the same year and directed by Griffith. While it's still played in the mug and gesture style he found at Biograph, the plot does outsmart our expectations. The sinister hock shop boss decides the starving mum trying to pawn her shawl to give the kids a Christmas meal, but sneaks into her flat, chloroforms her and decks the place with decorations and presents!

In a manner we are not used to in Australia, the programming aired a conflicting view screening – of black American pioneer filmmaker Oscar Micheaux's 1920 *Within Our Gates*, made, we are told, to voice the black indignation at Griffith's immense success with *Birth of a Nation* (1915).

This film contrasts Evelyn Preer, as a black school teacher trying to raise support for her Southern school with a Northern white do-gooder who has her own puppet black preacher defrauding his church. It deals with rape, the heritage of slavery and lynching, and

Maurice Elvey's *High Treason*.

has an alarming ending where the mob turns on the compliant black who has joined them in a manhunt.

While its content is startling, we see that Micheaux had neither the technique, resources or artistry that Griffith could muster. In a way that would sadden Micheaux, his film remains a footnote to the *Birth of a Nation* phenomenon.

Madness, perversion and death – Germany

A large German element proved a bonus. Pinschewer's own publicity filmlets were quite primitive, but he drew into his operation some of the classy talent of the day – Walter Ruttman, Guido Seeber, Lotte Reiniger – all recognizable and on whom any new insights were valuable. And it was novel to see such a quantity of this material in superior copies.

Star turn was the revelation of director Robert Reinert, who has vanished from the history books, though he was an important figure of the teens, working on major productions with celebrity performers. His 1918 *Opium* fielded the team of Werner Krauss and Conrad Veidt, the former as a vengeful Chinese and the latter incredibly young, swathed in a few expressionist bandages. It's madness, perversion and death all the way again, with some substance abuse thrown in, but we are still a long way from the studio contorted world these actors inhabit in *Das Cabinet des Dr. Caligari* (Robert Wiene, 1919). Here the images (including the exteriors) are shot in sunlight with Helmar Lerski's photography obtaining striking depth of field. Huge mobs of costumed extras fill lecture halls or throng Chinese streets. Nymphs in gauzy outfits float down river in narcotic visions.

Reinert's *Nerven*, also 1919, was more of the same as rival politicians battle to destruction. Mirrors, visions, blindness and breakdown. "Wo bin ich?"

Also surfacing, though it was believed lost, were four reels of Reinert's 1924 *Dam Uhl*, with one of those *Incident at Owl Creek* plots where the lead's life flashes before his eyes as he falls to his doom. Lang star Carl de Vogt remembers treachery aboard ship and lust in the castle. The sinister imagery registers in a largely unintelligible fragment.

Equally unfamiliar was Manfred Noa's 1922 *Nathan der Weise*, a spectacular account where Werner Krauss, now a more mature performer, plays a father who sees his family destroyed by the Crusaders. Raising a child left with him in error, he becomes involved with De Vogt, as a Knight Templar spared for his dignity by Saladin. Huge sets and spectacular battles show the influence of *Intolerance* (D. W. Griffith, 1916) and we get the parable of the father who gives his three sons rings, without saying which is charmed to make the the owner virtuous, throwing them into competition – to account for the choice between Jews, Christians and Islam. Intriguing, even if the content is Sunday School stuff. The initial run of this film was used as an excuse for the first Nazi organized riots.

Also on show was Berthold Viertel's 1924 *Die Perücke*, centering on a bewitched wig which takes over the personality of bald clerk Otto Gebuhr, who is drawn to the deceased Duke's palace to seek revenge against the guilty lovers. Filmed again by Lerski, this one is stronger in design and lighting than plot and performance.

These were preposterous and fascinating in equal measure and the audience recognized that. What people will make of *Se7en* (David Fincher, 1995) and *Freeway* (Matthew Bright, 1996) if they past 70 years?

The most approachable movie, however, was Georg Wilhelm Pabst's little seen 1928 *Abwege* (*Crisis*), a work much closer to modern tastes.

It is set among the professional class of its day. Businessman Gustav Diessel – a Pabst regular from *Die Weisse Hölle vom Piz Palü* (*White Hell of Pitz Palu*, 1929) and *Westfront 1918* (1930) – neglects wife Brigitte Helm, so she has an affaire with artist Jack Trevor, also in *Geheimnisse einer Seele* (*Secrets of a Soul*, 1926). She is set to leave with him, but he doesn't show at the station. Diessel having warned him off. Back at home, the husband again declares he has to go off on business, so she breaks out the cloche hat and furs, and heads to the cabaret for some decadence: balloons, streamers, toy boys, drunken boxers and dope.

This is the heart of the film. Although they wuss out on any explicit depiction, the atmosphere is overwhelming and there is the marvelous moment of Brigitte, in defiance, sweeping the nearest male onto the dance floor and then abandonning him still stunned at his luck.

It is a minor statement but made with silent film technique at its most expressive, full of telling pieces of staging. Brigitte finding the artist's flat full of drawings of her, socialite Hertha Von Walter, whose hand Dressel kisses with obvious distaste, being the one to alert him to the impending crisis. It is one of the most striking and assured Helm performances, filmed when she was 22 and confirming that she had great star presence.

Heavy fathers & devil apes – Shanghai in the 1930s

My own interest was focused on the retrospective on the pre World War II Shanghai filmmakers. There, as in most of Asia, silents continued to be produced well into the '30s. Some writers argued that audiences were seeking out the local silent films which had the qualities that the imported talkies had abandonned. Their embattled industry peaked as the Japanese advanced and the KMT and Communists jockeyed for ideological dominance. Rural common ties were at the mercy of feudal war lords, and the relentlessly popular productions juggled commercial and political realities under the scrutiny of censors, financiers and brutal gossip writers.

Derek Elley's selection from the new print ups from the mainland archive outnumbered those I had been able to watch in a couple of decades of searching.

On view were more of the surviving films of the legendary Ruan Lingyu, subject of Stanley Kwan's 1991 movie biopic *Centre Stage*, with Maggie Cheung.

In Richard Poe's 1931 *The Peach Girl* (*Taohua Qi Xue Ji*), 21 year old Ruan is associated with the peach blossoms in some stylish photography. Of course, she can't have rich boy Jin Yan, defending compatriots with the sophistcates in intertitles like "A city girl's beauty depends on powder and rouge."

Ruan's last film, *National Style* (*Guo Feng*, Luo Mingyou and Zhu Shilin, 1935) – made just before her suicide, was on show. Its effort to endorse the government's then Confucian line provides some curiosity value. cp 44

The academics eyed the pros suspiciously and one veteran European attendee singled out the Chinese retrospective, which wasn't triggering his nostalgia mechanism, and muttered, "They should stick to their own hemisphere."

Dark City

After the cult success of the low-budget Spirits of the Air, Gremlins of the Clouds (1989), director Alex Proyas had international box-office success with The Crow (1994).

Subsequently, Proyas has been back in Australia filming Dark City, starring Rufus Sewell, William Hurt, Kiefer Sutherland and Jennifer Connelly.

Backed by American mini-major New Line and shot at the Fox Studios in Sydney, this elaborate science fiction mystery thriller is a surrealist journey into a world where alien insects living inside the heads of human cadavers have the ability to alter the environment around them – to terrifying effect.

MICHAEL HELMS spoke to producer Andrew Mason, and co-writer and director Alex Proyas during production.

Andrew Mason

WHAT IS *DARK CITY* ABOUT?

It's the story of one man's search to discover his own identity, his memories, for years it will take for a series of crimes.

Our hero wakes up in a hotel room and there's a further of evidence that seems to point to his being a murderer. He certainly doesn't feel like one and he attempts to discover who's been manipulating his life and what they want from him.

HOW DOES HE DISCOVER THIS?

A detective, who starts off pursuing our hero [illegible] his [illegible] the city they find themselves in. He also discovers, and gets help from, a doctor who looks like he's helping the Strangers, a group of individuals who are, in fact, manipulating his life and him.

WHAT SORT OF BEINGS ARE THESE STRANGERS?

I suppose you'd have to say they're aliens, but it's a horrible term because it's come to be associated with all sorts of educative portrayals of individuals from other planets or other dimensions. They are from somewhere else, but we're not sure where. The film tends not to explain a fair number of things. It's much more about the individual's struggle, and to a certain extent, about the deeper questions of what it is that makes a person. Is that person merely the sum of his memories, or is there something beyond that which would make him "him" if he had no memories?

HOW DID THE PROJECT GET STARTED?

This is a script originally written by Alex Proyas five or six years ago. Then, at the beginning of '94, after we'd finished work on *The Crow*, he sat down and reassessed the script. In the wake of the success of *The Crow*, we were able to start the project rolling. However, we went through a couple of different incarnations. We started with Disney, went to Fox and now we're home, if you like, at New Line.

Miramax, which is an arm of Disney, had released *The Crow* and had an enthusiasm for any other project that Alex might have up his sleeve. Then, with a management change and things shuffled around, it was just altogether better for us to move on.

WHAT DID THE VARIOUS WRITERS CONTRIBUTE TO THE STORY?

In 1994 we brought Lem Dobbs in to write with Alex. Alex felt that he had a terrific story but needed some help in fleshing out the characters. Lem had written *Kafka* [Steven Soderbergh, 1991] and a number of other fabulous screenplays, and turned out to be a terrific collaborator.

Then, in '95, we engaged David Goyer

to work with Alex. We wanted to make the story a little more accessible, and beef up a little of the action involved in it. David has written *Blade*, which is now going into production with New Line, and a number of other science fiction screenplays. He was also eventually the screenwriter on *The Crow: City of Angels* [Tim Pope, 1996], although by mutual agreement we just ignore the subject.

WHAT DIFFERENCES AND SIMILARITIES DOES *DARK CITY* HAVE WITH *THE CROW*?

It deals with a dark landscape once again. It's a fantasy and there's a comic book element. People I'm sure will draw similarities, not so much in the design of the picture, but in the aesthetic approach, because both pictures have very much a look that Alex has dictated. They're not the same, but you can see the same taste reflected in both.

Other than that, there are not a lot of similarities. This film is very smart and very character driven. It just happens to be set in an unusual environment. There's a lot that will satisfy people who enjoy science fiction concepts, but at the same time, it's also a very strong thriller and very satisfying in that respect. It's a long time since that particular combination appeared.

WHAT PART DO SPECIAL EFFECTS PLAY IN THE FILM?

Alex and I are perhaps overly familiar with visual effects techniques. Once again we have a lot of model work, as we did in *The Crow*, a lot of digital compositing and a moderate amount of computer-generated imagery, all of which is being done here. The models are in the process of being completed and will be photographed here. We'll do all the compositing work with a Sydney-based company.

BESIDES THE MODEL WORK, ARE THERE ANY OTHER PHYSICAL EFFECTS?

Yes. There is what I would regard as the normal level of practical on-set effects. If you're into this sort of subject matter, if you're into anything vaguely resembling science fiction, it's inevitable that you'll need to do something mechanical, some trickery, on set.

DO YOU PERSONALLY LIKE BEING INVOLVED WITH THAT TYPE OF WORK?

It's been a fascination of mine for ever, and I got stuck with it after I was involved with Mirage Effects, a company I set up with a bunch of partners back in the early '80s. We wound it up in '88 partly because we'd overreached ourselves, expecting that the Australian industry would flower into that kind of effects area. That, of course, happened to be the time when the Australian government was reducing the taxation benefits of investing in films.

That leads me on to my great hobby horse of all times, which is that Australian films in the past 8 to 10 years have been increasingly squeezed away from anything to do with fantasy or science fiction because of the budget limitations imposed by the financing structures that are possible in Australia. I don't think there's been any film, apart from *Babe* [Chris Noonan, 1995], that's been made here in the last 6 to 8 years which had any sort of fantastical element, any science fiction concept, to be explored.

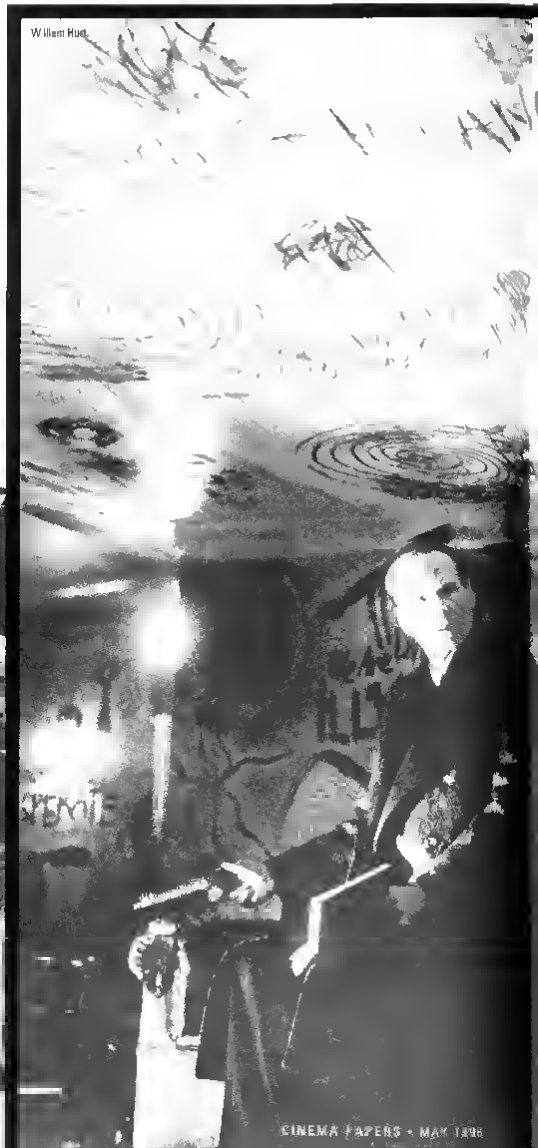
If your budget is constrained by what money you can raise from the Film Finance Corporation and some advance from a distributor, you're probably going to be working at a budget level that's $8 million maximum. It's really very difficult to entertain these sorts of concepts at that level.

I would hope that as more of the foreign distributors like Miramax, New Line and Fox become interested in the Australian scene, that financial input will allow Australian filmmakers to get back into those areas and explore them again, as they nearly did in the '80s.

You can say the same thing happened in New Zealand as well. Now that Peter Jackson's been able to get hold of some foreign coin, he can deal with subjects like *The Frighteners* [1997].

HOW MUCH IS *DARK CITY* COSTING?

Co-writer and director Alex Proyas



William Hurt

I knew you'd ask me that as soon as I got on to that subject and the answer is, "No, I can't." We've been totally tight lipped about the budget, won't even mention a budget range. It's not a cheap picture, though. We're shooting for 15 weeks, which is considerably more than most Australian films. There's one day we're photographing at a beach but apart from that every thing is built. There are 50 sets and a couple of them are truly huge.

WHAT'S THE GENERAL DESIGN OF THE SETS?

There's the City, which we've built as an interior street set in one of the large pavilions of the Sydney Showgrounds. The City is a totally designed thing which is intended to reflect the con cept that this city has been constructed by somebody from frag ments of memories that they've taken from people. The City tends to have bizarre things in it, like buildings in which there are no windows except for the one that person remembered. We needed to build it in order to have a very definite 'look'.

As well, the whole film is set at night and we didn't really want to be filming at night. Hence the need to do every thing indoors. I don't know that there's anywhere where we could have gone to film locations... maybe Prague.

ARE THERE HORRIFIC ELEMENTS IN THIS FILM?

It depends on whether you're horrified by people injecting you in the fore head. I'm sure there are some people who'd enjoy it, but I think that would fall into that general category.

The film's not intended to be horrific though. It's not intended to be R rated. I guess there are concepts which are hor rific, if you like, but I couldn't say there are any specific images which are.

ARE THERE ANY GORY ASPECTS TO IT?

No. We've fairly deliberately avoided that. We just didn't want to end up being rated out of a market. Alex was concerned to have the story told with out that. We haven't got much blood anywhere.

HOW HAS NEW LINE BEEN TO WORK WITH?

New Line has been absolutely fabu lous. They've basically given us total creative freedom. We obviously had a bunch of discussions with them when we first came to them. But, having done that, we arrived at a point where we all agreed what we were after and that they wanted a film from Alex. So, there's been no particular reason for them to want to interfere.

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO SHOOT IN AUSTRALIA?

Alex and I both live here. That's overly simplistic, of course, but we have a lot of friends here among the crew and know a lot of people. We figured it would certainly be better value for money and that we would be in our own environment.

Without being silly about it, there's also a certain extent to which you like to be able to bring relatively large pro jects back to work in a town where you've been based for a while. It's cer tainly more fun doing it here than it would be in Wellington, North Carolina.

IS *DARK CITY* THE FIRST PROJECT TO GO THROUGH THE FOX STUDIOS?

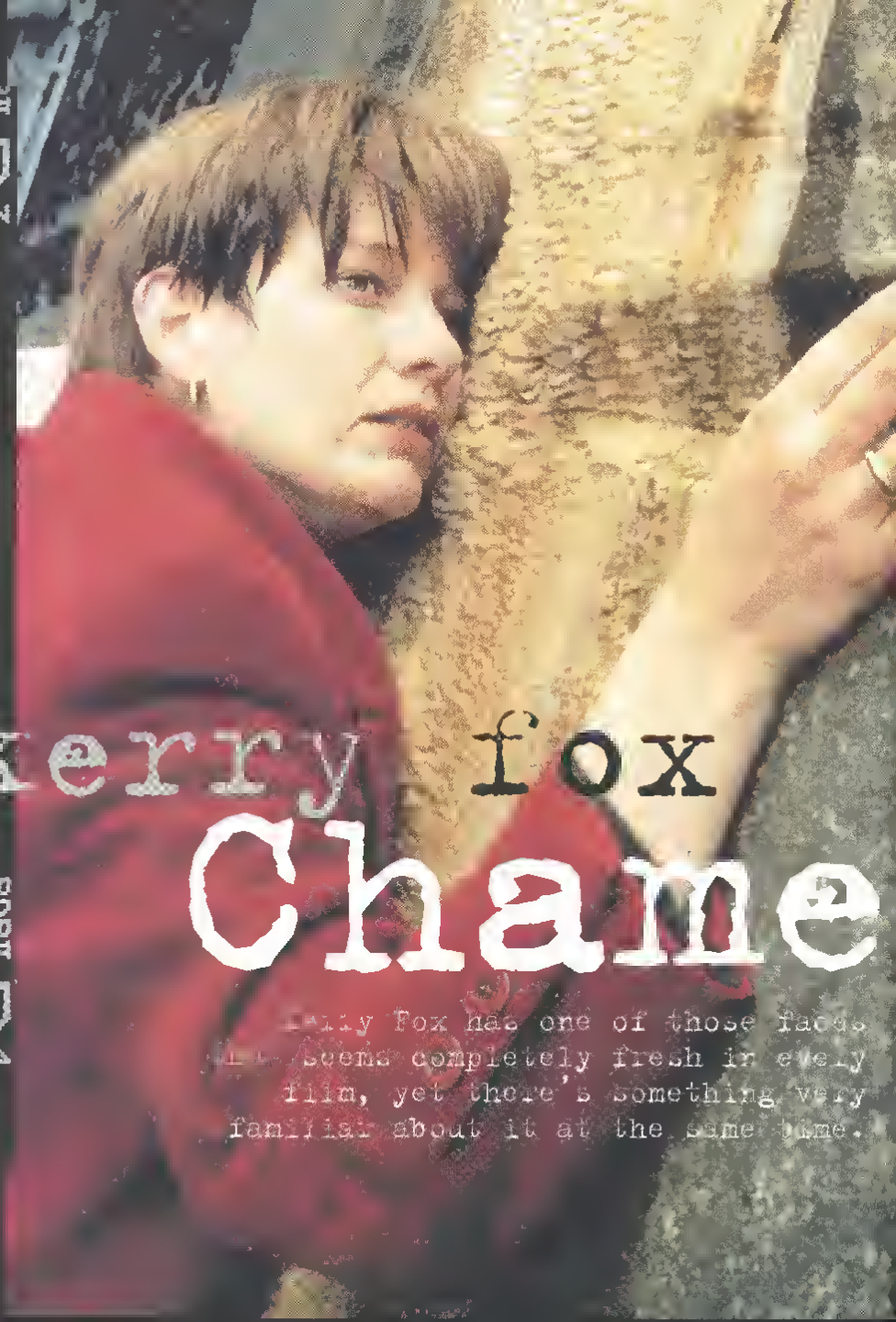
It's a little bit of a misnomer to call it Fox Studios at the moment. Fox is partly in occupation, but the Sydney Royal Easter Show still has one more year to run, and in Easter they'll be tak ing it over again and filling it with cows and sheep. So, at the moment, what we have are a couple of extremely large and wonderful buildings which are exhibition pavilions and we're using both of those.

It will be a couple of years before Fox will have completed building the stu dio and I don't think it can possibly be soon enough. There is a vast difficulty associated with trying to make any film involving a lot of sets without having a studio complex. You need a bunch of good sound stages close together and with enough facilities there to support the construction of sets and creation of special effects and all those sorts of things. To have all those things rela tively close to the centre of a major city like Sydney is an amazing boon. As soon as it opens its doors, it'll be swamped.

WILL YOU BE SWAMPING FOX WITH PRO JECTS? DO YOU PLAN TO CONTINUE IN THIS SCI-FI, FANTASY AREA?

A little bit. This will be the first project going out under a new production company banner Alex and I have estab lished called Mystery Clock Cinema. It will, I hope, produce a number of pro jects in this area. It certainly won't be dealing exclusively with science fi 44

It will be a couple of years before Fox will have completed building the studio and I don't think it can possibly be soon enough. There is a vast difficulty associated with trying to make any film involving a lot of sets without having a studio complex.



kerry fox

Chame

Kerry Fox has one of those faces that seems completely fresh in every film, yet there's something very familiar about it at the same time.

Leon

By Tim Hunter

It takes a little while before you remember with surprise that this is Kerry Fox and that brings with it a sense of reassurance, and a confidence that the performance is going to be worth watching.

Fox as an actor has a quality that is hard to define, but is universally respected. She's not particularly 'out there', she's not what you'd call a 'star', but she does have a definite screen presence, and a solid and varied body of work, for which she consistently gathers plaudits. She is considered to be an international actor now, and in Australia and New Zealand, at least, she has a special place as the local girl making it big.

Currently living in London and well known in Europe for her television and theatre work, Fox began her career in her country of birth, New Zealand. After studying at the New Zealand Drama School, followed by a handful of stage and television credits, Fox made an impressive début as Janet Frame in *An Angel at My Table* (Jane Campion, 1990). She then crossed the Tasman, lived in Australia for six years, and worked on *The Last Days of Chez Nous* (Gillian Armstrong, 1992) and *Country Life* (Michael Blakemore, 1994), before hitting the international big time in *Shallow Grave* (Andrew MacDonald, 1994). More recently, she has worked on three very different films: Michael Winterbottom's *Welcome to Sarajevo*, Tom Fitzgerald's *The Hanging Garden*, and Richard Flanagan's *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*, a film she returned to Australia to work on.

A major part of Fox's success and international respect is due to the care with which she chooses her film rôles. Says Fox of selecting parts:

Anything like that is relative. I don't know how other people figure out what to do with their careers, but for myself, it's very rarely that I'll accept a job. I don't want to do anything that I think is going to be a piece of crap. Because I find it takes a lot out of me to do a film, I commit myself to it fully, and I have to have faith in it and want to follow it through. When I have gone into a film, and it hasn't had all those things, I find it so damaging, it's really not worth it for me in any way.

I consider all the options, but the script is obviously the most important thing. Generally, if it's a complete piece of work in itself, if you can value it as a piece of art and it can stand up by itself, even without a production behind it, I think that's important. I don't know if a lot of people agree with me about the script needing to be like that in order to be a good film, but, in my experience, that happens to be the case.

Then, obviously, there's the director and what their nature and philosophy is; and then the character – whether I believe that I have that character somewhere inside me, and if it's something that I want to pull out or not. If I feel I know it or [I'll] have some kernel of recognition there – other factors come in. I never want to do the same thing twice, for example, and that generally dictates choice as well. I want something that's going to frighten me, that's going to take me very far beyond my experience.

It was never really Fox's plan to remain in Australia for very long; the call of the international was strong and insistent. She was just following the career path she had laid out before her. Fox:

I lived in Australia for six years, and in that time I did two films, but I've put a lot of energy and effort into working internationally. I felt that whenever there was the opportunity I had to make the most of it. So I worked a lot in America and London, and spent a lot of energy working in Australia. It paid off here in London, but it didn't pay off in any of the other places.

People have a very different perception of me here in Europe than they do in Australia, and Australians were very shocked at the response to my name at the Berlin Film Festival (for *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*). I'm very well known in France and Berlin and England, and they see a lot more of my work. In Australia, you don't actually get to see a lot of my work. I do a lot of television here, and so million people watch it. I'm much more widely known, and my work is more varied. So obviously that's why I'm here.

> "I think Australians really back away from the sensibility of a film like this."

In amongst all the film and television work, Fox has more recently done quite a lot of theatre work as well, but she doesn't sit back and strategically work out a balance between the three mediums.

I don't think it works like that. So much of your career is based on luck – what comes up and what you get at the time. I don't actually plan it in that sense at all. When I first came over to London, I was trying to do theatre and it didn't come up at all, and then suddenly it did last year. It came out of the blue, it certainly wasn't at my initiation, because I was trying to crack it years ago and couldn't. And then, of course, as the rule goes, when you stop trying to do something –

The versatility that Fox has displayed throughout her acting career kept her in good stead for her rôle in *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*. She plays Sonja, both as a 17-year-old girl and as a 38-year-old woman, something of a challenge for the 31-year-old actor. Says Fox:

Once the decision was made for me to play Sonja younger as well, it was suddenly a relief for me. That wasn't part of the first deal, I was never considered to play the younger part at all, and when it became an option, it somehow made playing her older easier; took the weight off it a bit.

I think it was a concern that I wasn't old enough, but I really wanted to do it. In the end it may be something I'm criticized for, but, as far as my versatility goes, I see it as my biggest skill. I rely on it, but it's a funny two-edged sword. It also means you don't get cast because people don't know who you are, and they can't pigeon hole you, or place you in a box. I think there's a lot of caution from investors when they cast me, because I'm not, and never will be, a star, simply because I don't play myself in films, whereas that's the general rule of what stars are: they play variations of themselves. With three film rôles pretty much back to back recently, one would think that the offers, and the projects that Fox herself wants to work on, have been flooding in. But Fox tells a different tale about landing parts:

It's a mix. I don't get a million scripts pouring in, because there aren't that many good ones around. I suppose the best way to explain it is to talk about these three latest films and how I got into those. With *Welcome to Sarajevo*, I hadn't worked for quite a while when that came up. I met [director] Michael Winterbottom, and learned later that Michael, his producer and Channel 4 wanted me, but Harvey Weinstein from Miramax didn't want me – Harvey never wants to cast me in things. So it was a big fight to get me on board, and in the end it was Andrew MacDonald who stepped in and twisted Harvey's arm to cast me, and the next day I had the job. That was terribly horrific, because I desperately wanted to do that film, so the idea that I was so close and yet so far away was really quite disillusioning.

With *The Hanging Garden*, Andrew MacDonald and Tom Fitzgerald, the director, had just been away on holiday in Canada. They cast each other's films, Tom had cast Andrew's films, like *A Life Less Ordinary*, and Andrew had cast Tom's feature, and told Tom I was the only actor neurotic enough for it. So Andrew came back with Tom's script and threw it across the desk at me, and said, "Here, you'll probably like this piece of arty shit", and he was right. So I called Tom immediately and said I really wanted to do it.

With *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*, I met Andrew Knight one time when I was in Australia, and they [Artist Services] offered me one of their projects – which I didn't want to do – but I asked if I could read all the other films that they had in development. He gave me about four scripts. I read *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*, and really desperately knew that I wanted to do it straight away. So, I wrote to Richard Flanagan and told him I felt very strongly that I had to do this part. I think Richard was really pleased, because he originally wanted me to play it but he'd been told by Artist Services that there was no way I would do it, because I turned down the other film.

Fox still believes strongly in the film, so much so that she's ready to defend Flanagan's first feature's poetic and esoteric vision – something that she thinks the Australian film industry will have difficulty in accepting:

I think Australians really back away from the sensibility of a film like this. I'm very aware of that, and I know that the industry does, because the things that make the money are all those self-mocking comedies. Obviously there's a criticism of *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* that it's over-sentimental or over-earnest. The fact is, I'd rather that in a first film than more bland humour. ●

In the company of men

Andrew L. Urban

Howard (Matt Malloy) and Chad (Aaron Eckhart) Neil LaBute's *In the Company of Men*.

Middle America, like New Zealand, is not a place you would expect to produce filmmaking at the edge. People like Vincent Ward, Jane Campion and Peter Jackson have grown up in social environments that are in some ways restrictive of behaviour and restricted in their worldliness.

Similarly, Neil LaBute of Fort Wayne, Indiana, a Mormon lecturing in a Mormon University, is living in what we might perceive as the middle of socio-creative nowhere. Wrong. The social and life experience restricted environment seems to work as a propellant for adventurous creativity.

In the Company of Men, LaBute's first feature, not only won the Filmmaker's Trophy at the 1997 Sundance Film Festival (among several other awards), it has shocked and confronted critics and audiences with the brute force of the central character's moral void. Chad (Aaron Eckhart) is a salesman and he can make you believe anything, even that he has fallen madly in love with you.

"Chad has no emotions, no feelings, no loyalty, so I took it from there", says Aaron Eckhart, whose performance won him the 1997 Golden Satellites Outstanding New Talent Award. Why does he do it? "Because I can", says the character in a chillingly honest line.

Chad and Howard (Matt Malloy), two junior executives en route to a six-week project in another city, complain about the various frustrations of their lives – in particular, those with women, having both been recently dumped by their respective girlfriends, it seems. Chad, in an attempt to get even with the female gender, devises a cruel game to find a suitably vulnerable young woman and simultaneously date her, to get her to fall in love with them both and then both unceremoniously dump her. Just to show a woman what it's like. Howard, Chad's immediate superior for this project, reluctantly agrees.

All goes accordingly to plan when they discover Christine (Stacy Edwards), a temp working in the company's offices, who happens to be deaf. She leads a lonely life, and the attentions of two men at once has an intoxicating effect. What began as a nasty prank is revealed as being deadly serious, with a seniority struggle between the two men part of the battle. The pain Chad's vicious game inflicts is severe.

The discomfort for audiences begins at the moment of meeting Christine, she is an attractive young woman, clearly sensitive and intelligent. Her deafness makes her vulnerable in our eyes, especially as she is unattached, and obviously living with her mother. Here is a victim waiting to be victimized. But Edwards saves her character from being a victim – and from giving a predictable performance – by having a clear and humane objective. While she did some research with deaf people to develop physical techniques – such as the monotonic, nasal speaking voice – she did not *play* the victim. Edwards:

> It was important to me to remember Christine's a normal woman who wants to fall in love. She happens to be hearing impaired but she does not wallow in that. She wants no concessions made for her – that's how I approached it. I think she's very strong and I feel fortunate to be able to step into her shoes. She was a challenge, as we didn't want to make fun or to be stereotypical.

Edwards' performance is critical, in that the effect of Chad's betrayal is reflected in her emotional response to it. It was here that Edwards found it difficult, and she thanks her male co-stars for making it easier for her:

> It wasn't difficult until the end. Christine had to fall in love with Chad, so that's how I played it. But it was harsh at the end, only made possible by allowing them to affect me.

The film was made with some cash from a car accident compensation pay-out to two friends, plus US$5,000 from the actor Matt Molloy, and has taken nearly US$3 million in America – as well as having received considerable critical acclaim. LaBute's cinematic style – perhaps constricted by virtually no budget – is rainrod straight: the camera observes action within the frame, almost as if we were watching a proscenium theatre.

The story structure is linear, with five acts clearly defined, linked together by simple notices of the time scale, with furious timpani and discords, like some Greek chorus turned into a busy synthesizer. The ensemble acting is astonishing in its honesty and punch. LaBute says he based the work on Restoration comedy, where the witty deceive the witless in cruel fashion. But he also was conscious of using Shakespearean references, especially Chad's character, which was a relative of the Moor's from *Titus Andronicus*:

> I was always taken with Iago, a deceptive, awful character who, even as he was buried up to his neck, said something like, "If ever I've done good in this life, I regret it."

In this film, Chad gets away with all the nasty tricks he plays on his fellow humans, and so does LaBute, who claims that the only autobiographical element is a scene in the boardroom, when Chad is reading a company newsletter about various employees, whose names come from LaBute's personal hate list, people in academe with whom he had had a run in. "It was a chance to have them remembered forever."

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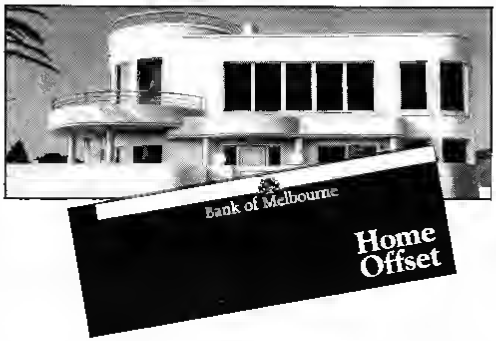

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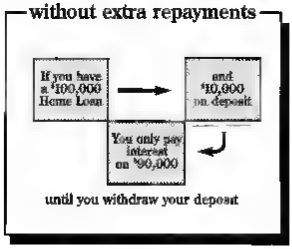

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I'm writing this book [*Reflections: An Autobiographical Journey*] to exorcise a few demons, celebrate a few angels, explain my life more fully to my children; and in the hope of giving a few aspiring filmmakers some incentive to keep going. Some people one meets on the way, some books one reads, even some films one sees, are extremely important.

If you want to do anything seriously, do it as a hobby. I've always believed this. As soon as it becomes your profession, a degree of compromise comes in. Vincent van Gogh says, "How does one become mediocre? By compromising and making concessions, today in this matter, tomorrow in another, according to the dictates of the world, by never contradicting the world and by always following public opinion."

Photography was my profession, cinematography my hobby. It was a safe start. My instinct has always rejected compromise and here my steady income protected me. But maybe the compromise was having a steady job.

The few films I went to see at this stage of my life puzzled me. What a lot of terrible rubbish was dished up to people! Stories larger than life with heroes larger than life embarrassed me. Violence – and especially violation of the spirit – confused me and, later on, angered me. I wanted to see real people. Real people were always larger than life to me. But what is reality? The way I went about making my films was already unreal enough.

Strangely enough, all my early films are quite surreal. In fact, it would be better to call them "unreal". In the making of each picture, however, everything was totally clear to me, everything could be explained, everything was dripping with meaning. But as soon as a character developed too much for my liking, he or she had to disappear so that I could get on with my movie. I was totally blind to the possibility of revealing true emotions through actors. It was only when I discovered that after each film I could not remember what the meaning of it all was, that I realized something was drastically amiss. The only thing that was clear to me was the fact that through film I could explore the remote horizons of my dreams. Dreams would become reality in the absolute. That vast emptiness that surrounded and threatened me became habitable. But how to use film and communicate with others through film, without getting lost in distractions? How could I find – over and beyond appearances and beyond the mechanism of the movie making process – a truer reality? And how to

A Vulnerable Heart

paul cox

avoid "magnificent clarity" so that something remained a little later?

I love making films and I've been fortunate enough to get away with the type of films I've wanted to make. I have always believed that people are basically starving to see a bit of humanity on the screen. One must never under-estimate the public and I get deeply upset when I see films made by committees who think they know what the public is looking for, when one knows that people want something that touches them. But you say this to one of those creative producers in Hollywood and he'll say: "What do you mean, what emotional truths? This is show business, man. We need to hook them." "That's entertainment!" is one of the most arrogant sayings on earth. What's entertaining to some can be extremely boring to others.

I think it was Andrei Tarkovsky who stated that if film is art, why do people expect it to be easily understood? Nobody expects this from the other arts.

Most films I see take me away from the heart of humanity. I like to believe that life must be an act of love, and, despite all the disappointments, I still fervently love people. I'm interested in people, not only for what they say and how they behave, I'm interested in their silences.

In films the 'inner' rarely comes to the surface, yet film is the very medium that can penetrate and then project one's inner side. The most obvious problem is that film has become larger than life, there's no room for life's realities. That's why I don't like 'stars' who project larger-than-life characters. Each thinking, feeling, struggling individual is much bigger than any of them.

What a paradox to work in a medium filled with all these contradictions. I taught myself filmmaking, or rather learned from my collaborators. I became intrigued and obsessed by its potential. It's the most wonderful invention of our century – unfortunately mostly misused and abused.

Once a year Telluride, a small township in the heart of Colorado, hosts a prestigious film festival, or rather a film weekend, where film buffs meet to celebrate the latest 'serious movies'. I was honoured once with a small retrospective, and again a few years later, together with Isabelle Huppert, asked to return with our film *Cactus* [1986]. Before the screening I was to introduce Isabelle, who this time was the guest of honour.

Telluride is an extremely beautiful spot in the mountains. In the afternoon before our screening, Isabelle and I drove into the country, sat quietly near a mountain stream and listened to the wonderful sounds around us. I have a very clear recollection of the light that played on the water. Much depends on the nature of light.

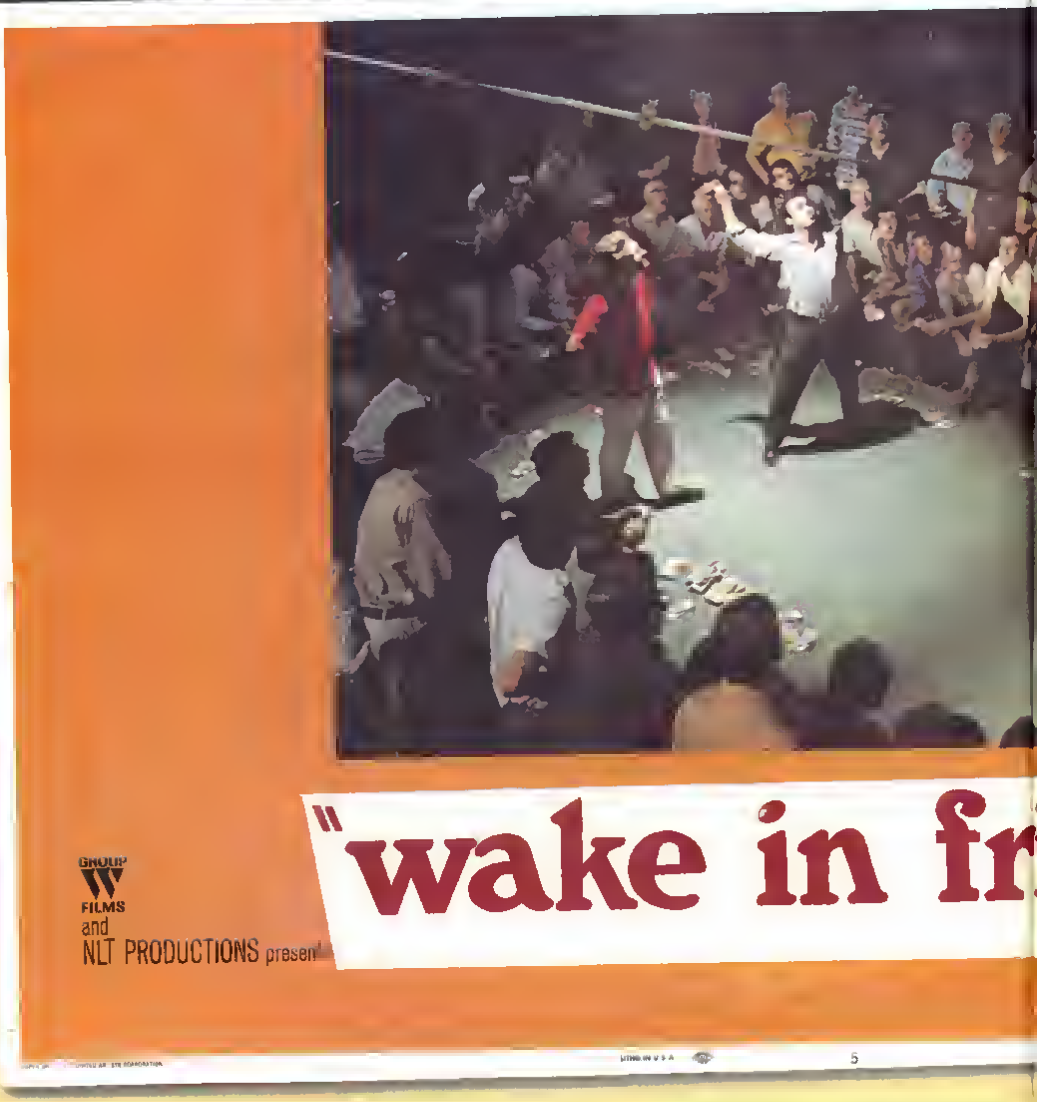
We peacefully made our way back to town and arrived early enough to attend the first screening of Andrei Tarkovsky's *The Sacrifice* [1986]. I knew of Tarkovsky's problems trying to get the film off the ground. No American producer would touch him and it is to the great credit of the Swedish Film Institute that he was finally allowed to make this film with its help in Sweden.

Tarkovsky was a rare and noble being and certainly one of the finest filmmakers ever. *The Sacrifice* moved me very deeply. On the way back to the hotel, I had to stop the car to collect myself.

There was an hour left before our premiere and instead of rehearsing my little speech to introduce Isabelle – this was her evening, a celebration of her career – I found myself furiously writing a speech against the American film industry. I don't know what got into me. I knew of Tarkovsky's fatal illness, how difficult it was for him to survive as a filmmaker and how much he'd fought to retain his integrity. My ill-timed, badly-prepared speech ran as follows:

> Thank you for inviting *Cactus* to Telluride and for paying this tribute to Isabelle Huppert. I can't think of any one who deserves it more, especially here where people, for a few days at least, are serious about film. So far I haven't heard the word "product" once and even the question "What's your next project?" hasn't been asked.
>
> Unfortunately I have to digress a little here, as I've just seen the real sacrifice Andrei Tarkovsky made with his film *The Sacrifice*. From the town of Larissa in Greece to the city of Arles in France, I've recently seen Rocky fighting for his tenth title, Rambo committing more obscenities and Arnold Schwarzenegger terminating anything that moved around him. Today I saw an extraordinary film made by an extraordinarily courageous man. No American producer or company wanted to help him make the film, yet you're all here now celebrating his sacrifice. It must be embarrassing for any thinking, feeling American to find even the smallest cinema in Europe loaded with films like *Teen Werewolf*, *The Karate Kid* or *Top Gun* representing your country together with McDonalds and Kentucky Fried, while you could have been the proud producer of this important contribution to contemporary cinema.
>
> Walking the streets of Manhattan is a far more exciting experience than watching the average American movie. Why is this in a country that harbours the amazing Juliard School of Music, has the finest dance and opera companies, and a bubbling cultural life that embraces many cultures? Why all this wonderful activity can't rub off a little on your cinema is an appalling mystery. Cinema in this country is nothing but the manufacture of bad taste, which is pretty tricky stuff when you realize that the right marketing of chicken wings or hamburgers can change the form and shape of less-advanced countries.
>
> Film wasn't invented to patronize and corrupt our children and to appeal mostly to our lower instincts. America is the country that has the power to change the future use of the medium, to restore some balance, to allow people like Tarkovsky to speak.
>
> After all, you control legally or illegally most screens around the world and could bring love and peace and true imagination to those screens, instead of constant exploitation. I know of many marvellously talented people in your country who, in this climate of exploitation, will never get a chance to show what this country really has to offer.
>
> I'm not totally condemning what most of you think is 'the right stuff', but I'm pleading for some balance. I'm asking you to restore the cinema to its true potential and once again make it available to grown-ups.
>
> We live in difficult and extremely dangerous times. Man has no history of being able to handle power. Power has always been abused and misused. We all know the power of the media. Film, of all media, could help us to see again, to feel again, to love again. The Third Reich used film very successfully. Goebbels was fully aware of its potential. Let's all thank the gods that television hadn't been invented then. If Hitler and Goebbels had been able to go on daily talk back shows, The Third Reich would probably still be marching.
>
> I did see *Top Gun* and was appalled. Its budget was at least thirty times more than that of *The Sacrifice*. To think that *Top Gun* will be seen by a hundred million people, and *The Sacrifice* by a handful, is horrifying.
>
> I'm here to introduce Isabelle Huppert, an expert and I'm sorry I had to digress. I just wonder what would have happened to Isabelle had she been born and raised in America and *The Lacemaker* [1977] had been a 'package' aimed at a particular youth market. Most probably the film would never have been made or, if by some fluke the film had gone through the system, it would never have had the same poignant integrity. Too many experts would have stood by to tell the director Claude Goretta how to make it more marketable.
>
> Isabelle never neglected the inner, always gave the characters she portrayed a true dimension. A unique talent quietly blossomed on the other side of the Atlantic in an atmosphere that still recognizes film as a means of self-expression. She has become one of the finest actresses of our time. She's now ready for Hollywood and, by God, Hollywood needs her!

I've somehow reconstructed this speech from the bits and pieces I later found in my pockets. There was, of course, no applause and much disapproval. When my name appeared on the screen, the audience was not impressed. The next day I was more or less ignored and left.



A RICH H

THE INAUGURAL FESTIVAL OF AUSTRALIAN FILM, CURATED BY SCOTT
THE VICTORIAN PREMIER'S DEPARTMENT AT THE STATE FILM THEAT
GRASP AN OVERVIEW OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF "AUSTRALIAN" CINE

I had seen many of the films, even *Walk into Paradise* (Lee Robinson, 1956), in their first release, but many I had not seen – and these were a revelation! All desire to be empirical or pedantic melted away in the face of the overwhelming delight afforded by the slight but rich heritage we already have.

Not one of the films (even shorts) has dated. Even the ones I thought suffered from inadequate storylines or pedestrian acting (no more than three) have an intrinsic liveliness, honesty and vigour of presentation which makes them eminently watchable today – a claim I personally would not make for such Hollywood classics as, say, *The Man who Came to Dinner* (William Keighly, 1941) or *Ben Hur: A Tale of the Christ* (William Wyler, 1959) which to my eyes have dated hideously.

The films included by the curator provide a most satisfying introduction to our heritage, though one would hope to see both more categories and more "mainstream" films – for example *Malcolm* (Nadia Tass, 1986), *Man of Flowers* (Paul Cox, 1984), *Bliss* (Ray Lawrence, 1985) and *Road to Nhill* (Sue Brooks, 1997) – with a hipper edge. Experimental and animated films also warrant inclusion.

As it was, the festival was divided into seven sections, often with accompanying shorts (the same way *Strictly Ballroom* [Baz Luhrmann, 1992] was on its initial release) – a good idea, though I suspect logistical problems – availability, in other words – meant some shorts were shown in the wrong place and one or two features appeared without their supports.

THE PLACE

Films were placed chronologically where appropriate but, as in the first section, the inclusion of a recent film – David Elfick's superb bitter sweet little masterpiece, *No Worries* (1993), which moved, entertained and horrified me just as much as it did when I first saw it some three years ago (a film every Australian should see at least twice) – actually set the tone of the genre better than an earlier film could have done. This 1990s view of Australians struggling with drought (and the dishonesty of the banks) reinforces the main serious theme of 1890s poetry and shows in why so many yeomen farmers, organic woodcutters and smallholders were dispossessed during the Great Depression. Without moving out of its proper orbit – present tense, caring for the future – this film represents one of the most lamentable of chapters in our socio-cultural history. And all in 92 minutes!

Tall Timbers (Ken G. Hall, 1937), a "bush adventure yarn", seemed a little wooden to me (pun intended) – the acting styles too close to the Effete films of the period (glaring examples of the Cultural Cringe) to really engage my deepest sympathies – all the less worthy to my eyes because the much earlier films of Longford Lyall and Tal Ordell were so much more genuinely cinematic. And the miniatures – again for my eyes – were far too obvious.

Sunday Too Far Away (Ken Hannam, 1975), a look at the archetypal "shearer" subculture and starring Jack Thompson, Peter Cummins and the immortal Reg Lye, which (again) I had seen shortly after its release, today strikes me as the most truly "Australian" film of all time, a screenplay whose relevance will never fade, performances which will forever glow with authenticity, an encapsulation of an ethos now passing into cliché but miraculously caught here in the full resonance of its cultural reality.

So this category gave us a moving picture of why Europeans (the "Boat People" of the past 200 years) have difficulty "taming" the land – this theme is shared by all three screenplays – and an unforgettable taste of many levels of tragedy, irony and comedy inherent in our history and living culture.

The fourth item in this section, *Mad Max 2* (George Miller, 1981) – undoubtedly the best of the Max trilogy – while well done and convincing, with some strong performances, seems to me little more than "sound and fury, signifying nothing" – an empty legend. Obviously this is a minority viewpoint as it was this very film which lifted NIDA graduate Mel Gibson to international prominence, if not international super stardom.

But I question the Australianness of this concept: all post-apocalyptic scenarios seem to me to be ipso facto "international" (the later *Smoke Em if You Got Em* [Ray Boseley, 1986], which introduced Nique Needles, had the same "doom and gloom" mood and the same sort of movement as a choreography in the repertoire of the New York-based Alvin Ailey Dance Theatre when they toured here in 1985). And I think it salutary to observe that the Friday late night time-slot drew no greater audience than a "normal" 8.45 screening.

THOSE WHO WERE HERE FIRST

This section presented the most far ranging contrast of any category. The first offering, *Butter Springs* (Ralph Smart, 1950), produced under the

ERITAGE

MURRAY[1] AND PRESENTED BY THE AUSTRALIA DAY COUNCIL AND
RE IN MELBOURNE, SEEMED LIKE AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY TO
MATIC STYLE. IT PROVED TO BE SOMETHING VERY MUCH MORE.

aegis of the Ealing Studios is – to my eyes – the most beautiful film ever made here, or ever likely to be made here a treasure – I would dare to say the sort of film Robert Flaherty hoped to make but, *Nanook of the North* (1922) notwithstanding, he was never given quite the tight raw material What makes this film so much more than a mere screenplay is its utilization of a real Aboriginal tribe their innocence and native joy invade the whole project like a palpable benediction

What's more, it cannot truly be seen in isolation It is part of a progression of Anglo-Australian productions made for Ealing which probably began with *The Overlanders* (Harry Watt, 1946), continued through *Bush Christmas* (Ralph Smart, 1947), *Bitter Springs* (Ralph Smart, 1950), *Kangaroo* (Lewis Milestone, 1955) and, more or less, terminated in *The Shiralee* (Leslie Norman, 1957), made possible by Tommy Trinder's touring Australia for the Tivoli circuit and in which Reg Lye gives a personification of the archetypal bush poet swaggie which elevates his performance to the plateau formerly occupied only by Arthur Tauchert's "Bloke" It has been reached only on two other occasions Jack Thompson's appearance as Clancy of the Overflow in *The Man from Snowy River* (George Miller, 1982) and Russell Crowe's character in *Proof* (Jocelyn Moorhouse 1991) Together with *Sons of Matthew* (Charles Chauvel, 1949), these films remain the high water mark of Australian cinema

Bitter Springs was shot in Quorn, near Port Augusta in South Australia, and for one reason or another took six months to reach conclusion, during which time the Ooldea people – the traditional owner-guardians of that land – became seasoned film workers and were later used in Fox's *Kangaroo*, starring Maureen O'Hara, Peter Lawford and Finlay Currie But *Bitter Springs* captured more completely than any other film I know that innocence which years later inspired Chris Wallace Crabbe to write

Nor can the farmer, turning with his spade,
Bring Shard or Helm to light [...]
Innocence clad in brown and faded gold,
Walks up and down these hills
Where unobtrusive, flickering flowers
Rebuke the show of daffodils

Though starry eyed by 1990s standards, *Bitter Springs* is consistent with the Spirit of the Time when it was made, and its beauty still communicates.

The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith (Fred Schepisi, 1978), a masterful treatment of Tom Keneally's novel based on the real-life plight of Jimmy Governor, now seems the most powerful and arguably the most meaningful picture drama yet created within this culture On its initial release, it seemed too brutal to some, the Australian actors too overblown beside the natural indigenous performers for more discerning viewers (I remember being one of this group) Today Jack Thompson, Tim Robertson and all the others seem perfectly representative of the mindsets of their characters at the time in which the story occurred

I really believe this film deserves to be re released today A younger audience responsive to the so-called "action" movies of Bruce Willis and Mel Gibson would find little to shock them but much to promote thought.

The next film, *Jedda* (Charles Chauvel, 1955), was not to my taste To me it is an empty "chase film" Built on (to me) embarrassingly paternalistic foundations, the story's concentration on the sexual allure of the lead actor – a character who defies his traditional love and law – verges on sexploitation I'm aware there is another view, but I could not share it

THOSE WHO CAME LATER

This selection began with *A Floating Life* (Clara Law, 1996) A fine effort, it presents the sort of filmmaking we encounter in *Eat Carpet*, but rendered on a much larger canvas. A touching, funny, bitter sweet gem – a film one can watch many times and get more from each time Stylistically, it is truly international and culturally mature a good sign for the future of an Australian film culture

Sons of Matthew, Charles Chauvel's undying masterpiece, took five years to complete and is an achievement of epic proportions – a saga, a poem, a glory Riveting in its story telling and action, in its magnificent setting on Queensland's Lamington Plateau, it evokes the pioneering spirit as not other Australian production has done It stands in relation to the development of Australian cultural identity as *The Birth of a Nation* does to American, or *All Quiet on the Western Front* to world culture

This tale of three generations of Irish settlers touches many chords at the heart of Australian life and meaning, and is still as fresh, as moving, as overwhelming, as it must have been when first made A monument Every Australian should see this film

They're a Weird Mob (Michael Powell, 1966) is hilariously true to the book by John O'Grady (interestingly, O'Grady and Lee Robinson, the associate producer, make Hitchcockian cameo appearances in the film's early scenes) and still works gloriously as film entertainment Whilst it is conceived along decidedly British lines, its content is so overwhelmingly Australian that it stands (in my view) at the very pinnacle of Australian film simply great (and timeless)!

JUST BETWEEN US

This section presented *The Shiralee*, the 1957 gem starring Peter Finch, Dana Wilson as the daughter, and Jessie O'Shea and Syd James as the friendly older couple, and Reg Lye in his immortal personification of the archetypal bush poet-swaggie A simple tale though meaningful today in its basis in a marriage break up, *The Shiralee* is the last glimpse of that "innocent" Australia which began to disappear during the Menzies boom years

Newsfront (Phil Noyce, 1978), a tribute to the newsreel cameramen of an earlier era, seemed on release to be a major artistic achievement, especially in its brilliant interweaving of actual and recreated footage Today it appears as a competent piece of highly professional filmmaking. It is hard for today's video, computer and Internet generation to understand the importance of newsreels – small cinemas in each capital city were devoted to playing them all day – in the period from the 1930s to the early 60s This tends to date the film's contemporary impact

The next offering, *The Year My Voice Broke* (John Duigan, 1987), a thoughtful, quietly satirical view of small town awfulness, is noteworthy for the realism of the story and the totally cinematic, haunting acting of Noah Taylor All the actors are more than credible – especially Ben Mendelsohn – but there is such potent evocation in Taylor's silences that his character, whilst doing next to nothing, sears it into our consciousness, like a heated brand into a

steer's hide. Again, although no doubt based on the writer director's own experiences in the 1950s, the interrelationships are all so beautifully represented as to make the film as fresh as a new discovery.

NEIGHBOURHOOD WATCH

For me, these were the least satisfying films of the Festival.

Walk into Paradise, which I saw in the Metro, Bourke Street, on its first release, seemed to my teenage eyes lushly coloured but light on plot. Now, the colour faded to little more than burnt pink and purple, the film seems more like a documentary than a drama, the traditional tribal garb looks gorgeous but one felt that a more mature level to the story would have given the film more body.

Turtle Beach (Stephen Wallace, 1992) annoyed me because of its story – which I found unnecessarily anti Malaysian – and, whilst I found my admiration for Greta Scacchi as an actor undimmed, I was annoyed that her great skills were wasted on such a biased and unworthy storyline.

The Year of Living Dangerously (Peter Weir, 1982), with its super stars Mel Gibson and Sigourney Weaver, its serious presentation of a female actor in a male rôle (an inspired choice by this most sensitive of directors) and its delirious lampoon of English eccentricity by Bill Kerr, is an altogether different kettle of fish. Based on historical/political actuality, the film delves into character and motivation to give its audience an experience of true stature and substance. A real accomplishment from an Australian director who holds within himself the potential to be another John Huston.

THE PLACE AS SEEN BY VISITORS

The films shown here offered three very different scenarios.

The first, *The Overlanders*, was the first of the run of Anglo-Australian films. Based on a real war time cattle run, it presents the traditional ingredients of the rugged Aussie myth, perfectly rendered by the Polish migrant Chips Rafferty, who also stars in the genuinely shocking probe into the very pits of small-town awfulness, *Wake in Fright* (Ted Kotcheff, 1971 – the film which alone packed out the venue).

For me it had a rad too much of the war-time propaganda to it but its observation of the real features of Australian life, its honest acting and other production values earn it its "classic" status.

Until The End of the World (Wim Wenders, 1992), boasting some big international names, enters the same conceptual realms as *Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome* (George Miller and George Ogilvie, 1985), but, though more conventionally plotted, leaves even less of a real impression in the mind.

Wake in Fright, on the other hand, though set in a blousey, over heated and mythical present, red raw with frustrated sensibility and yet bursting at the seams with believable representations of human need, is riveting entertainment and an edifying essay into universal psychological states as they occur in small town everywhere (Paris, Texas?), in this instance capturing something uniquely and distressingly Australian – as *Road to Nhill* was to do some 25 or so years later.

Barry Mack Taylor, right, in [illegible] *My Voice Broke*.

... AND A BLOODY GOOD LAUGH

The final section comprised three comedies, created between 1938 and 1997, all of which are still funny, still appealing and, in the case of *The Castle* (Rob Sitch, 1997), set to make an appearance in the international arena, which could put it in the same class as *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (Stephan Elliott, 1994).

Let George Do It (Ken G. Hall, 1938) stars George Wallace, a great exponent of the English music hall tradition who re-expressed that tradition in a rambunctiously Australian way and whose film(s) today stand up better than those of Roy Rene (Harry van der Sluice), whose character, Mo McCackey (an amazing compendium of ocker Paggliaci-Jewish clown), ruled the local vaudeville stage from the early 1920s to the late '40s, and whose radio programmes even as late as 1948-9 were a thousand times more challenging and radical than *Priscilla* was when it appeared. Those who saw his major film recently (1994) found it leaden – a pity – for at his heyday he was nothing short of great.

Barry McKenzie (Barry Crocker) in Bruce Beresford's *The Adventures of Barry McKenzie*.

The Castle, a very domestic comedy about "little Aussie battlers", is wickedly tongue-in-cheek but, in court scenes raised to perfection by the impeccable comic timing of Charles Tingwell, erupts into pure classic comedy, timeless, refreshing and blithe – reminiscent of the greatest moments of the Ealing comedies of the 1950s.

The Adventures of Barry McKenzie (Bruce Beresford, 1972), an adaptation of Barry Humphries' epochal *Private Eye* comic strip, embarrassed most of us when first released. Today, it seems wonderfully funny, fresher and truer than when we first viewed it. It is truly one of Australia's funniest films.

At the artistic level, the Festival was a great success, though tiny glitches appeared: shorts not shown or shown with the wrong film, some prints, most notably *Let George Do It*, were missing several minutes.[3] But these were minor problems.

This reviewer would like to see more films like *Sweetie* (Jane Campion, 1989) and *Road To Nhill* shown in a festival context and one would like to see more films like *Mull* (Don McLennan, 1989) and *Heaven Tonight* (Pino Amenta, 1990)) being given commercial releases – films, that is, with a decidedly Australian bias. One suspects we will see more movies aimed at an American market. After all, "go with the flow" today is the go.

[1] Scott Murray is Editor of this magazine.

[2] Pike and Cooper give a joint credit of Lee Robinson and Marcel Pagliero, but the print on show only gave Robinson's name. Apparently, the French version only gives Pagliero's.

[3] The version shown is the longest in existence. No one knows what happened to the missing 20 odd minutes.

BACK ISSUES A Guide to What's in Stock

SEE TEAR-OUT SUBSCRIPTION CARD TO ORDER

Number 1 (January 1974) David Wilkinson Ray Harryhausen, Peter Weir Antony Gonzalez Gilliam Armstrong Kim G. Hall *The Cars that Ate Paris* **Number 2 (April 1974)** Censorship Frank Moorhouse Nicolas Roeg, Sandy Herbert, Film under Allende Between the Wars *Alice Purple* **Number 3 (July 1974)** Richard Brennan John Papadopoulos Wills O Brien William Friedkin The True Story of *Eskimo Nell* **Number 4 (December 1974)** Bill Shepherd Cliff Green Werner Herzog Between Wars Interzone A Salute to the Great MacArthur **Number 8 (March-April 1975)** Albie Thoms on surf movies Charles Chauvel filmmaker Ray Rean Wood Byron Hesketh Brian Probyn *Inn of the Damned* **Number 6 SOLD OUT Number 7 SOLD OUT Number 8 (March-April 1976)** Pat Lovell, Richard Zanonk, Sydney Pollack, Pier Paolo Pasolini Philip Adams, Don McAlpine *Don's Party* **Number 9 (June-July 1976)** Miles Feiman Max Lemon Mikios Jansson Lindsay Vincent, *Cadillac Tim Devil's Playground* **Number 10 (Sept-Oct 1976)** Magnus Dalhen Philippe Mora Krzysztof Zanussi, Marco Ferreri Marina Bellonchi gay cinema **Number 11 (January 1977)** Emilio De Antonio, Jill Robb Samuel Z. Arkoff Roman Polanski Saul Bass *The Picture Show Man* **Number 12 (April 1977)** Ken Leonh, Tom Hayden Donald Sutherland Bert Deling Pietro Tosi John Denkworth, John Saat, *Days of Hope The Getting of Wisdom* **Number 13 (July 1977)** Lone Malle Peter Cox, John Power Jeanne Sawaill, Peter Sykes Harvardin Bazadinat In *Search of Anna* **Number 14 (October 1977)** Phil Noyce Matt Carroll Ena Rahmer Terry Jackman John Huston *Luke's Kingdom The Last Wave Bliss Fire Lady* **Number 15 (January 1978)** Tom Cowan, Truffaut, John Feuillade Stephen Wallace the Tasmanian others Sri Lankan film *The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith* **Number 16 (April June 1978)** Donna Lindblom John Dorgan, Steven Spielberg Tom Jeffrey *The Africa Project*, Swedish cinema, *Dawn! Patrol* **Number 17 (Aug Sept 1978)** Bill Bain Isabelle Huppert, Brian May Polish cinema *Newsfront, The Night the Prowler* **Number 18 (Oct Nov 1978)** John Lamond Santa Berg Alain Tanner Indian cinema *Dead Cathy's Child* **Number 19 (Jan-Feb 1979)** Antony Gonzalez Stanley Hewes Jeremy Thomas Andrew Sarris, sponsored documentaries *Blue Fin* **Number 20 (March April 1979)** Ken Cameron Claude Lelouch Jim Shepherd French film *My Brilliant Career* **Number 21 (May June 1979)** Vietnam on Film Ole Cantrillo French cinema, *Mad Max, Stepchild, The Odd Angry Shot* Franklin on Hitchcock **Number 22 (July-Aug 1979)** Bruce Petty Lucinna Amgh Allan Thomas *Alice's Birthday* **Number 23 SOLD OUT Number 24 (Dec Jan 1980)** Brian Trenchard Smith, Ian Holmes Arthur Hiller Jerry Trapitz Brazilian cinema *Harlequin* **Number 25 (Feb-March 1980)** David Puttnam Janet Strickland Everett de Roche Peter Fenton *Chain Reaction Star* **Number 26 (April May 1980)** Charles H. Joffe Jerome Hellman Malcolm Smith, Australian nationalism Japanese cinema Peter Weir *Water Under the Bridge* **Number 27 (June-July 1980)** Rudolf Klaiser Peter Yeldham Donald Rashke obituary of Hitchcock NZ film industry *Grendel Grendel Grendel* **Number 28 (Aug Sept 1980)** Bob Godfrey Dennis Kenny Tim Burton John O Shea Bruce Beresford *Bad Timing Roadgames* **Number 29 (Oct-Nov 1980)** Bill Ellis, Ian Wright Edward Woodward Lone Breaks Stephen Wallace Philippine cinema *Crossing, The Last Outlaw* **Number 30 (Dec 1980-Jan 1981)** Sam Fuller *Breaker Morant* trethought, Richard Lester Canada supplement, *The Chain Reaction Blood Money* **Number 31 (March April 1981)** Bryan Brown looking in on *Dressed to Kill, The Last Outlaw Fatty Finn Windtunnel* lesbian sex video, the new generation **Number 32 (May-June 1981)** Judy David Will Emerson, Richard Rush Sri Lankan cinema *Puffin Enemy Number One The Alternative* **Number 33 (June-July 1981)** John Dorgan the new sex comedies Robert Altman, Tomas Gutierrez Alea Edward Fox *Gallipoli Roadgames* **Numbers 34 and 35 SOLD OUT Number 36 (February 1982)** Kevin Dobson Brian Kearney Sonia Hofmann, Michael Robitz *Blow Out, Breaker Morant, Body Heat, The Man from Snowy River* **Number 37 (April 1982)** Stephen MacLean Jack Weaver Carlos Sante Peter Usinov women in drama, *Monkey Grip* **Number 38 (June 1982)** Geoff Burrowes George Miller James Ivory, Phil Noyce Jean Fontaine Tony Williams law and insurance *Far East* **Number 39 (August 1982)** Helen Morse Richard Mason Anja Breien, David Muilken Dorak Grunger Norwegian cinema National Film Archive *We of the Never Never* **Number 40 (October 1982)** Henri Safran Michael Rohde Pauline Kael Wendy Hughes, Ray Barrett, *My Dinner with Andre, The Return of Captain Invinc* bh **Number 41 (December 1982)** Igor Auzins, Paul Schrader Peter Tammer Lillian Cavani Colin Higgins *The Year of Living Dangerously* **Number 42 (March 1983)** Mel Gibson John Waters Ian Pringle Agnes Varda copyright *Strikeland, The Man from Snowy River* **Number 43 (May June 1983)** Sydney Pollack Danny Lawrence Graeme Clifford *The Dismissal Summer Locke Elliott's Careful He Might Hear You* **Number 44-45 (April 1984)** Dave Stevens Simon Wincer Susan Lambert a personal history of *Cinema Papers Street Kids* **Number 46 (July 1984)** Paul Cox Russell Mulcahy Alan J Pakula Robert Duvall Jeremy Irons *Eureka Stockade, Waterfront, The Boy in the Bush A Woman Suffers, Street Hero* **Number 47 (August 1984)** Richard Lowenstein, Wim Wenders David Bradbury Sophie Turkiewicz Hugh Bidgood *Pebbley Under Arms* **Number 48 (Oct Nov 1984)** Ken Cameron Michael Pettinnan Jan Sarik Yaram Gross, *Bodyline The Slim Dusty Movie* **Number 49 (December 1984)** Allan Greene Brian McKenzie Angela Punch McGregor Ennio Morricone Jana Cumpen horror films, *Mad Lyons* **Number 50 (Feb March 1985)** Stephen Wallace Ian Pringle Walter Barzewczyk, Peter Schrenk, Bill Conn Brian May *The Last Bastion, Bliss* **Number 51 (May 1985)** Lone Breaks Harrison Feid Nant Hazlehurst, Dusan Makavejev *Emoh Ruo Winners Morris West's The Naked Country Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome Rod Harry Under Arms* **Number 52 (July 1985)** John Schlesinger G Ilinn Armstrong Alan Parker soap operas, TV news film advertising *Don't Call Me Girlie For Love Alone Double Scotch* **Number 53 (September 1985)** Brian Brown Nicolas Roeg Vincent Ward Harold Crawford Emile Ghossoubs NZ film and TV *Return to Efate* **Number 54 (November 1985)** Graeme Clifford Bob Weis John Bearman Menahem Golan, rock videos *Wills and Burke The Great Mickie Redgrey The Lancaster Miller Affair* **Number 55 (January 1986)** James Stewart Dale Hollyne Brian Thompson Paul Verhoeven, Derek Maddings, tie in marketing, *The Right Hand Man Bridesville* **Number 56 (March 1986)** Fred Schepisi Dennis O Rourke Brian Trenchard Smith John Hargreaves *Dead end Drive-in The Mars Things Change Kangaroo, Tracy* **Number 57 SOLD OUT Number 58 (July 1986)** Wendy Allen Reinhard Hanff, Orson Welles the Cinémathèque Française, *The Fringe Dwellers Great Expectations The Untold Story The Last Frontier* **Number 59 (September 1986)** Robert Altman Paul Cox Lone Breaks Agnès Varda the AFI Awards, *The Movers* **Number 60 (November 1986)** Australian television France Zeffirelli Noelle Tesh Bill Bennett, Dutch cinema new wave marriage, *Gallipoli* **Number 61 (January 1987)** Alex Cox, Roman Polanski Philippa Mole Martin Amnigue Rhem South Australia *Dogs in Space Howling III* **Number 62 (March 1987)** Screen violence David Lynch, Gary Grant, ASSA audience predication barometer film *Cinema The Story of the Kelly Gang* **Number 63 (May 1987)** Gillian Armstrong Antony Gonzalez China Heywood Eimon Leonard Tony Kennedy Martin *The Sanctifier Landslide, The Wild Bunch Adventure, Jilted* **Number 64 (July 1987)** Nostalgia Donna Hopper Mel Bishop Vladimir Doberov Brian Trenchard Smith charlatanism, *Insatiable* **Number 65 (September 1987)** Angela Carter Wim Wenders Jean Pierre Gorin Derek Jarman Gerald Lenoyer Gustav Hasford AFI Awards *Poor Man's Orange* **Number 66 (November 1987)** Australian screenwriters a name and China, James Bond part 1, James Clayton Video De Laurentiis New World *The Navigator When a That Girl* **Number 67 (January 1988)** John Dorgan James Bond part 2 George Miller Jim Jarmusch Soviet cinema women in film 70mm filmmaking in Ghana *The Year My Voice Broke Send A Gorilla* **Number 68 (March 1988)** Martha Ansara, Channel 4 Soviet cinema part 2, Jim McBride Glenmore *Ghosts Of The Civil Dead Feathers, Ocean, Ocean* **Number 69 (May 1988)** Sex, death and family films, Cannes 88, film composers Vincent Ward David Parker Ian Bradley *Pleasure Domes* **Number 70 (November 1988)** Film Australia Gillian Armstrong Fred Schepisi Wes Craven John Waters Al Clark, *Shame* screenplay part 1 **Number 71 (January 1989)** Yahoo Serious, David Cronenberg 1988 in retrospect film sound *Last Temptation of Christ*, Philip Brophy **Number 72 (March 1989)** *Little Dorrit*, Australian sci fi movies, 1989 mini series Aromarama *Cats in Lindos V'ln* women and Westerns **Number 73 (May 1989)** Cannes 89 *Dead Calm* Franco Nero Jane Campion *The Prisoner of St Petersburg* Frank Pierson Pay TV **Number 74 (July 1989)** *The Delinquents* Australians in Hollywood Chinese cinema, Philippe Mora Yun Sekel Twins, *Ghosts of the Civil Dead Shame* entrenpley **Number 75 (September 1989)** Sally Bongers the teen movie enmeshed *Edna Last Pet Cemetery* Martin Scorsese and Pan Schrader Ed Pressman **Number 76 (November 1989)** Simon Wincer *Dingley Down Under* Kennedy Miller Terry Hayes *Bangkok Hilton*, John Dorgan *Flirting*, Romeo Dennis Hopper Frank Howson Ron Cobb **Number 77 (January 1990)** John Farrow mono graph *Blood Oath*, Dennis Whitburn Brian Williams, Don McLennan *Breakaway "Crocodile" Dundee* overseas **Number 78 (March 1990)** *The Crossing* Ray Argall, *Return Home* Peter Greenaway and *The Cook...* Michel Cimant, *Bangkok Hilton Barlow and Chambers* **Number 79 SOLD OUT Number 80 (August 1990)** Cannes report Fred Schepisi on cereal interview Peter Weir and *Greenaway* Pauline Chan Gus Van Sant and *Drugstore Cowboy* Barman stories **Number 81 (December 1990)** Ian Pringle *Isabelle Eberhardt*, Jane Campion *An Angel At My Table* Martin Scorsese and *Goodfellas, Presumed Innocent* **Number 82 (March 1991)** *The Godfather Part III* Bruce Schnauzer *Reversal of Fortune Black Robe* Raymond Hollis Longford *Backsliding* **Number 83 (May 1991)** Australia at Cannes, Gillian Armstrong *The Last Days at Chez Nous The Silence of the Lambs, Hyam, Dead to the World* Anthony Hopkins *Spotswood* **Number 84 (August 1991)** James Cameron and *Terminator 2, Judgement Day* Dennis O'Rourke *Good Woman of Bangkok* Susan Dermody *Breathing Under Water* Cannes report, FFC **Number 85 (November 1991)** Janelyn Macdonald, *Proof* Blake Edwards, *Switch* Colin Khanh *Theme & Pause* independent exhibition and distribution FFC part 2 **Number 86 (January 1992)** *Romper Stomper The Nostradamus Kid Greenkeeping Eighteen* Kathryn Bigelow HDTV and Spike Lee **Number 87 (March 1992)** Multicultural cinema Steven Spielberg *Hook* George Negus and *The Red Unknown* Richard Lowenstein *Say a Little Prayer* Jewish cinema **Number 88 (May-June 1992)** *Strictly Ballroom, Hammers Over the Anvil Daydream Believer* Wim Wendler's *Until The End of the World* Satyajit Ray **Number 89 (August 1992)** Cannes 92 David Lynch Vinit Kan avak Gmini Ambla *Fortress*, film literature nonnarrative, tiger movies debate **Number 90 (October 1992)** *The Last Days of Chez Nous* Kelly Scott 1492, Stephen Elliott *Frauds*, Gregio Manganella Cultural Differences and Ethnicity in Australian Cinema John Frankenheimer's *Year of the Gun* **Number 91 (January 1993)** Clint Eastwood and *Unforgiven* Rani Rai George Miller and *Gross Misconduct*, Dave Eflick's *Lovers Lanes, On the Beach* Australia's first films part 1 **Number 92 (April 1993)** *Reckless Kelly* Georgia Miller and *Lorenzo's Oil* Magon Simpson *Alex, The Lover* women in film and television Australia's first films part 2 **Number 93 (May 1992)** Jane Campion and *The Piano* Laura Mulvaney and *Broken Highway* Tracey Moffatt and *Bedevil* Lightworks and Avid Australia's first films part 3 **Number 94 (August 1993)** Cannes '94 Steve Buscemi and *Reservoir Dogs* Paul Cox, Michael Jenkins *The Heartbreak Kid*, Coming of Age films Australia's first films part 4 **Number 95 (October 1993)** Lynn Hart Mulvaney *Mummies & Dreams*, Franklin on the screenings of previews *The Custodian* documentary sample reform Tom Zubrycki, John Hughes, Australia's first films part 5 **Number 96 (December 1993)** Queensland issue overview of film in Queensland, early Queensland cinema Jason Donovan and Donald Crombie *Rough Diamonds*, Australia's first films part 6 **Number 97-8 (April 1994) 20th** Anniversary double issue with New Zealand supplement, Simon Wincer and *Lightning Jack*, Richard Franklin on leaving America Australia's first films part 7 **Number 99 (June 1994)** Krzysztof Kieslowski Ken S. Hall Tribute filmetography supplement, Geoffrey Burton Pauline Chan and *Traps*, Australia's first films part 8 **Number 100 (August 1994)** Cannes 94 NSW supplement, Bernardo Bertolucci's *Little Buddah The Sum of Us Spider & Rose*, film and the digital world Australia's first films part 9 **Number 101 (October 1994)** *Priscilla, Queen of the Desert*, Vietnam supplement, P J Hogan and *Muriel's Wedding* Glen Lewin and *Lonely Break*, Australia's first films, Part 10 **Number 102 (December 1994)** *Once Were Warriors* films we love *Bank of Beyond*, Carol Heiniss Lindsay Anderson *Body Melt*, AFC supplement, *Spider & Rose* Australia's First Films, Part 10 **Number 103 (March 1995)** *Little Women* Gillian Armstrong Queensland supplement, Geoffrey Simpson, *Heavenly Creatures*, Film by Australia's First Films **Number 104 (June 1994)** Cannes Manifesto, *Billy's Holiday, Angel Baby, Epsilon, Vacant Possession* Richard Franklin Australia's First Films Part 12 **Number 105 (August 1995)** Mark Joshua Cole Jacqueline McKinnon, Stewart Intak Cannes Review Sauvenir Retrospective, Mary Crowen, *Dad & Dave* **Number 106 (October 1995)** Garrard Lee and John Meyrand on *All Men Are Liars*, Sam Nail *The Small Man Under the Sun*, AFC low budget seminar **Number 107 (December 1995)** George Miller and Chris Noonan talk about *Babe*, New trends in animism The rise of neo gore cinema **Number 108 (February 1996)** Conning John Hughes *What I Have Written* Cthulhu The Top 100 Australian Films Nicole Kidman in *To Die For* **Number 109 (April 1996)** Rachel Griffiths runs the gamut, Toni Collette and *Clear* Sundance Film Festival Michael Tolkin Morals and the Multiplex **Number 110 (June 1996)** Roll on Hear travels to Cannes Clara Law's new home, Shirley Barrett's *Love Serenade*, Richard Franklin **Number 111 (August 1996)** Scott Hicks and *Shine* The Three Chinas Trusting Christopher Doyle *Love and Other Catastrophes* **Number 112 (October 1996)** Lawrence Johnston's *Life*, Return of the Mavericks Queensland Supplement Part 1 Sighting the Unseen Richard Lowenstein **Number 113 (November 1996)** Peter Jackson *The Frighteners*, SPAA AFI supplement, Lee Robinson *Sunday Too Far Away, Hotel de Love Children of the Revolution* **Number 114 (February 1997)** Baz Luhrmann *William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet*, Dean Cornelius SPAA The Aftermath *Idiot Box, Zero 38* **Number 115 (April 1997)** John Seale and *The English Patient Newsfront, The Castle* Ian Baker Robert Kracker **Number 116 (May 1997)** Cannes 97 Preview Samantha Lang's *The Well Kiss or Kill* Philip Noyce and *The Saint, Heaven's Burning* **Number 117 (June 1997)** Robert A. Harris and James C Katz talk to James Sharlank, Mario Peizzatti Alaks desert Diva here anymore *The Man from Kangaroo* **Number 118 (July 1997)** Terry Rawlings Frank Vandenburg and Kain Sallows Low budget independent filmmaking Stephen Amis *Alive Tribe, SMURF'S'97* **Number 119 (August 1997)** Ben Mendelsohn Bruce Town Boy Cannes Sixth International Dir Jakob Cinema Dead? Gregor Nicolas *Broken English* **Number 120 (October 1997)** Miranda Otto Frank Moorhouse Two Studios and a World of Difference Inbetween, Hawks and Ford Retrospective **Number 121 (November 1997)** LA Confidential a Demon Dogs, Stephen Fill at at Cannes *Exile in Sarajevo* Japanese independent film **Number 122 (December 1997)** Scott Czarny Skub szewski, David Hrabelsky and Eric Serra Mandy Walker All in a Days Work New Zealand film **Number 123 (March 1998)** Matt Dey A Sixth Peak of Talent, Michael Winterbottom's *Exile in Sarajevo* Young filmmakers get Lost

The suburban vacuum

With Lawn Dogs, *John Duigan returns to the sensibility and themes of his celebrated coming-of-age films* Flirting *and* The Year My Voice Broke.

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Three to go

1998 had a busy start with two feature débuts, The Boys *and* The Sound of One Hand Clapping, *in competition at Berlin, and Peter Duncan's keenly anticipated* A Little Bit of Soul. *But not all the critics are happy with what they are seeing on screen*

in review

MISTAKEN IDENTITIES • CHICKEN LEG DREAMING • GHOULISH BUT NICE

Jesus Quintana (John Turturro) in Joel Coen's The Big Lebowski

Film

THE BIG LEBOWSKI

DIRECTED BY JOEL COEN. PRODUCED BY ETHAN COEN. SCREENWRITERS JOEL AND ETHAN COEN. DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY ROGER DEAKINS. PRODUCTION DESIGNER JEFF MCCLEE. COSTUME DESIGNER MARY ZOPHRES. EDITORS ROBERT LEIGHTON, TRICIA COOKE. MUSIC CARTER BURWELL. CAST JEFF BRIDGES (THE DUDE), JOHN GOODMAN (WALTER SOBCHAK), JULIANNE MOORE (MAUDE LEBOWSKI), STEVE BUSCEMI (DONNY), DAVID HUDDLESTON (JEFF BIG LEBOWSKI), PHILIP SEYMOUR HOFFMAN (BRANDT), TARA REID (BUNNY LEBOWSKI). AUSTRALIAN DISTRIBUTOR PROGRAM. 35MM. USA, 1998. 116 MINS.

According to the production notes, the inspiration for The Dude (Jeff Bridges), the protagonist of Joel Coen's latest film, *The Big Lebowski*, was Philip Marlowe, the private eye of Raymond Chandler's LA crime novels. Until I read that I had been certain the model was Dean Martin's Dude in Howard Hawks' *Rio Bravo* (1959). Afterall, *The Big Lebowski* does a hefty trade in anecdotes and references to the Western and to Martin's character.

The opening sequence follows the trail of a tumbleweed as it makes its way from a desert town to Los Angeles. The first character we meet, so to speak, is the honey toned narrator, later revealed to be The Stranger (none other than Sam Elliott), and, looking like he just stepped out of Tombstone circa 1896, who introduces the homely yarn about a man named The Dude. Like Martin's Dude, Bridges has a drinking problem, a close friend who's there to protect him (and vice versa), and he's one heart attack away from complete impotence, whose collective resourcefulness sees them through a crisis they could never have endured alone. Sounds more and more like *Rio Bravo* by the moment.

Many would say that the problem of unfulfilled expectations is all mine, and indeed that's true. But it's likely to be a problem for any regular viewer of a Coen brothers film, too. For *The Big Lebowski* is easily one of the writer-director team's most underwhelming and slipshod films yet.

Jeff Lebowski, The Dude, is a long-in-the-tooth unemployed Los Angeles bum stuck in the groove and mindset of the '70s. Mistakenly assumed to be the millionaire Jeff Lebowski, he is set upon by thugs. In a glorious flour shower attack, the Dude approaches the other Jeff Lebowski (David Huddleston), an elderly indulged millionaire, and asks him to replace the rug the thugs urinated on, as it was obvious that it was his rug the thugs intended to foul.

When the thugs kidnap old man Lebowski's young wife Bunny (Tara Reid), Lebowski hires The Dude to deliver the ransom, but the exchange goes horribly wrong, no thanks to The Dude's loyal but misguided friend, Walter Sobchak (John Goodman), a crazed Vietnam vet and Judaism-convert.

In time, the odd circumstances of the situation — circumstances that were obvious from the very beginning, like why would thugs

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mistake The Dude's flea-pit for the home of a millionaire? — penetrate The Dude's dope-fogged mind. But in typical Coen fashion, the dys functional Dude, with the help of Sobchak and fellow bowling team member Donny (Steve Buscemi), merely add fuel to the plot's downward spiral into mayhem.

Recessive characters are rarely interesting to watch in the cinema, and The Dude is no exception. Bridges exhausts his character's repertoire of mannerisms and foibles with in the first 10 or so minutes and seems incapable thereafter of doing anything more than flailing his arms while trying to balance a White Russian cock tail. But blame for this does not rest with Bridges. Joel and Ethan Coen's screenplay is incapable of extracting even the expectations the film elicits in its promising opening scenes. "A man for his time and place", the narrator describes The Dude and, in his first encounter with Lebowski, the generational conflict is eloquently spelled out: on the one hand, the salt-of-the-earth millionaire whose success is the product of hard work, exploiting those lower in the food chain and playing by the rules' (though it is later revealed that he appropriated his aristocratwife's estate); and on the other, the anti-establishment, dopeir our hippie whose inaction has possibly became the establishment's great est pawn. Even the unhinged Sobchak sees through him: "Pacificism isn't something to hide behind", he tells The Dude.

Sobchak, too, is a mess of unrealized traits. He is clearly an uncontrollably violent man, a dangerous timebomb since the break up of his platoon and his marriage. "This is not 'Nam", he cautions The Dude as they assess Lebowski's refusal to replace the rug. "There are rules."

Unfortunately, *The Big Lebowski* is less interested in utilizing the complexities of its characters, their interactions and the morally incongruous landscape they inhabit than in propelling its disaster-infused plot, which sadly reduces the characters to the equivalent of powerless pawns.

The minor characters come off even worse, showing up for a delectably Coenesque turn (John Turturro as a depraved Latino prancing along the bowling alley to the strains of a Gypsy King rendition of "Hotel California" Julianne Moore as a hideously opportunistic conceptual artiste; Ben Gazzara as a Hugh Hefner-like porn film producer) only to disappear into the nether regions of an increasingly inconsequential plot.

The damage that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts just doesn't ring true of *The Big Lebowski*. There are some memorable scenes, John Turturro's over-the-top cameo included and, from the perspective of a Marlowe-inspired homage, some amusing portraits of the contemporary LA scene are to be found with in the film. Structurally however, it's a thinly-conceived film: a far cry from the skillful reworking of genre and the poignant fable of life's underdogs triumphing over the bullies that made *Fargo* (1996) so memorable. It's as if the bulk of the script writing that went into *The Big Lebowski* was how the joke merchants could extract from their repertoire another typical gag for which they have become renowned – many of which play like skit interludes.

It's as if the Coens, who have made a fine art of cleverly subverting film genres (executed to perfection in films such as *Miller's Crossing* and *Fargo*), have relied entirely here on playing with a genre of their own making: eccentric yet warmly appealing misfits, well-observed evocations of a place and oral subverting expectations of how film characters behave. In *The Big Lebowski*, however, it doesn't quite add up to a whole film. ● PAUL KALINA

LAWN DOGS

Directed by John Duigan. Producer: Duncan Kenworthy. Screenwriter: Naomi Wallace. Director of Photography: Elliot Davis. Editor: Humphrey Dixon. Production Designer: John Myhre. Costume Designer: John Dunn. Composer: Trevor Jones. Cast: Sam Rockwell (Trent), Mischa Barton (Devon), Kathleen Quinlan (Claire), Christopher McDonald (Morton), Bruce McGill (Nash), Eric Mariner (Sean). Australian Distributor: REP. 35MM. USA. 1998.

With *Lawn Dogs*, John Duigan shows that he has a natural empathy for that difficult period between childhood and adulthood — sometimes known as adolescence, but also known more simply as "growing up". It's a return to the same sensibility he exhibited in *The Year My Voice Broke* (1987) and *Flirting* (1990) — a recognition that you don't need to be 10 or 15 to experience feelings of anxiety alienation and dread of the 'adult' world around you. There is an essential disquiet we can all share of wanting to be your own person, free from social mores, but intimidated by the prejudices and expectations of our peers and of our protectors.

Lawn Dogs refers to the occupation of 22-year old Trent (Sam Rockwell), the lead male character of the film. Trent is one of a legion of working-class professional lawn mowers, and we find him one hot summer mowing the obscenely manicured lawns of Camelot Gardens and her father is under going a systematic programme at gaining influence in his community by becoming a board member of every committee he crosses. The mother, meanwhile, is obsessing on the social niceties of who to invite to the BBQ and who is con

Devon (Mischa Barton), *Lawn Dogs*.

sidered proper enough to be called a friend. Devon is a projection of a particular type of parenting which is becoming the bogey man of popular culture – where parents project their own fears, aspirations and anxieties onto their children – children as an extension of their parents' or miniature Mums-&-Dadsen the making.

The world of Camelot Gardens is a harsh, dehumanizing one, where appearances are more important than emotional satisfaction. While Devon's father, Morton (Christopher McDonald), busies himself with climbing the corporate ladder, his wife, Clare (Kathleen Quinlan), lazily carries out an affair with the local respectable thug, Brett (David Barry Gray). Their concerns over their daughter centre on how socially acceptable she is, and Devon continually subverts their expectations by acting out in bizarre and transgressive ways: vomiting her food at the table, pulling her dolls' heads and arms off, and peeing on her father's windscreen for example. Duigan and the performers have a knack of not making the characters one-sided or merely quirky: where the Stantons could be written off as merely small-minded and deserving of our pity, Christopher McDonald and Kathleen Quinlan do a great job of convincing us that they, too, see the cracks in their lives, if only for a split second before returning to their normality. The performances of Mischa Barton and Sam Rockwell can't be mentioned without praise. They both do justice to beautiful and complex rôles.

Trent is the classic outsider, threatening in his easy expression of male sexuality and a class apart from his employers. He lives in an abandoned trailer in the woods outside of Camelot Gardens, an environment diametrically opposed aesthetically and socially to Devon's. Trent's world is not the white trash/trailer park dwellers of recent films. Neither is it the overly sentimental working class backwater: there is genuine pain and complexity in Trent's environment, but, compared to Camelot Gardens it is a haven. The film is very clear in its politics. It abhors the vacuum created in the great divide between the blue- and white-collar workers, landing the blame squarely on the shoulders of the élite who 'protect' themselves from the workers around them.

Grace Michael (Heather Mitchell) and Dr Summerville (John Bodeen). *A Little Bit of Soul*.

Devon is drawn to Trent because they are both 'outsiders' with their own troubled pasts, and also because Devon has the magical quality of creating her own fairytale life to explore, and she can recognize Trent as a potential player in that life.

The film's narrative is infused with the story of Baba Yaga, a Russian fairytale that Devon is obsessed with, and repeats like a talesman. Baba Yaga is a witch who lives in the forest, and walks on chicken legs. A little girl finds Baba Yaga in the forest, and, as she flees from the horrible witch, is given a comb and a towel. When she throws down the comb, a forest springs up; when she throws down the towel, a mighty river appears. Devon absolutely believes in this story, and gradually she enacts the fairytale's version of morality and consequences with Trent.

Lawn Dogs is a 'coming of age' film, and, like most of these films, exhibits a strong undercurrent of dark sexuality. The primary relationship between Trent and Devon is almost a smokescreen for this sense of forbidden sexuality, how ever, as it is chaste compared to the relationships going on around them. The most intriguing of these is between Trent and Brett's friend Sean (Eric Mabius) – the other 'respectable' thug in Camelot Gardens. Sean and Brett are Trent's main antagonists, yet Sean has revealed to Trent his deeper attraction to him. They play out a twisted and subtle dance: opposites in class and temperament, and this dance adds to the undercurrent of drama and tension in the film.

The sexual ambiguity of the story is played out in the fairytale also. Often, the witch Baba Yaga changes gender as Devon refers to her variously as "he" and "she". The subject of the fairytale changes gender also: sometimes being a little girl, and finally, at the end, a little boy, reflecting the film's point of view as it shows both Devon and Trent's perspective. The ending of the film echoes the ending of Devon's fairytale – tragic yet redemptive. It is a big ending, which sits a bit strangely with the rest of the film's more underplayed feel, but also fitting as it teeters into the surreal, disarmingly 'light' ending of fairytales generally.

Lawn Dogs is a satisfying film on many levels: well written and crafted with great performances, it is direct in its message yet slightly strange and magical. Devon and Trent are true iconoclasts, thumbing their noses at social mores and creating a friendship that transcends accepted behaviour. Importantly, the film doesn't shy away from actively injecting a little bit of dark magic into the American ideals about family and community. ● MONICA ZETLIN

A LITTLE BIT OF SOUL

Director: Peter Duncan. Producers: Peter Duncan, Simon Martin, Martin McGrath, Peter F. Weber. Executive producer: Tristram Miall. Screenwriter: Peter Duncan. Director of photography: Martin McGrath. Production designer: Tony Campbell. Costume designer: Terry Ryan. Music: Nigel Westlake. Editor: Simon Martin. Cast: Geoffrey Rush (Geoffrey Usher), Ray Wenham (Richard Shorthighgoal), Frances O'Connor (Kate Haslett), Heather Mitchell (Grace Michael), John Gaber (Dr Summerville). Australian distributor: Columbia Tristar. 95min. Australia. 1998. 84 mins.

It's hard to be tactful about Peter Duncan's *A Little Bit of Soul*. A badly misconceived work, it misfires on many levels and there's little in it to praise.

Mind you, I felt much the same about Duncan's first feature, *Children of the Revolution* (1996). Aside from a cast it didn't warrant and the novelty of not quite knowing what might happen next, it had so little appeal and cohesion that I found it almost insufferable to watch. It was a veritable showcase of the most adolescent notions about human behaviour and its motivations, and about politics and society, and it was founded on the most facile of comedic concepts.

And so it is in *A Little Bit of Soul*. Both the story and its characters are little short of inane, and every moment of potential richness or thematic significance is deflected even as it's anticipated. It is as though Duncan's afraid of taking even a shred of his subject matter seriously. This film isn't rich satire, nor is it cleverly absurd – two attributes for which it ostensibly aims – it's just immature filmmaking.

We begin with Richard Shorthighgoal (David Wenham), a geeky biochemist on the verge of devising a chemical which can reverse the ageing process. Having struck out for sponsorship time and time again, and taken to doing ironing in a laundromat to survive, it appears he's finally found a benefactor in the vivacious and eccentric Grace Michael (Heather Mitchell), granddaughter of an esteemed scientist and wife of Federal Treasurer Gordon Usher (Geoffrey Rush). But his ex-assistant/lover, Kate Haslett (Frances O'Connor), is also out for the money, and when the two arrive at Grace and Gordon's country estate to do their respective pitches, they can barely maintain civility towards each other. Kate appears to have the edge, flirting with Grace like a grateful teenager, but then Grace declares a passion for Richard and her ulterior motive for backing his research, and all manner of demons are unleashed.

Initially, the film tries to set itself up as a charming romantic comedy in the vein of 50s films like *High Society* (Charles Walters, 1956) – with characters in a closed

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continued

setting at cross romantic purposes, frolicking, colliding and spouting repartee, and presumably this historical reference is the reason for the otherwise incongruous period soundtrack which dominates here). The science of "science fiction" is merely a catalyst and hard drop which might as well be journal small interior design. But then it attempts a genre shift into "darker" territory. Gordon and Grace revealing a malevolent streak to keep the conflict ongoing, only to be "resolved" and "involved" there elements which Duncan seems to believe necessary to make an audience laugh.

Then another twist and we're in Capra-land. *Yes, Minister*, terrifyingly, say *Mr Smith Goes to Washington* (1939) – after a death which leads to Gordon being called to account for his political performance, having earlier confessed to Richard that he can't get a hint of a grip on the enemy. Our football-minded Tony and his cameraman, played by Duncan, in an awkward concession to humanism and unmask the political process for a diplomatic sacrifice.

Aside from obvious nods to early greats like Capra, Duncan appears to be drawing from the sophistication and academy that allows Woody Allen in his best work to succeed with such apparently disparate elements to blend seamlessly from slapstick with profoundly affecting drama and to thread unpressing whimsy throughout to garnish a wonderfully perfect ensemble cast and to infuse their every exchange and gesture with layers of meaning. There are obvious parallels too with the Coen brothers' distinctive brand of gore, terror, absurdity and socio-political commentary. But unfortunately sitting through *A Little Bit of Soul* is like watching an overambitious and pretentious student work riddled with clumsily handed derivations and low on originality. It just doesn't tell.

To begin with, it's a case of too many genres – or, more accurately, genres ineptly mixed. Further more, the comedy just isn't there, and the structure is and behaviour within themselves do not a thigh slapper make. For example, immediately Jack and Kate arrive at the farm, we sit through what feels like at least twenty-fifteen excruciating minutes of Collins and Mitchell bawling, hooting, giggling, falling down, squealing at nothing in particular in the ersatz ostensibly of some kind of feminine hysteria. Then the foursome plays dress-ups and charades and there's much strutting and innuendo and more. Nothing, then naughty shenanigans in hallways and bedrooms. Hardly – nothing less likely to generate laughter than characters laughing uproariously at the antics. And the "horror" elements is confused and inane, and the socio-political elements is downright simplistic. "Nobody knows what the bloody hell's going on!" yells Gordon in court in the face of his exposure as a political dunce. Unfortunately, it's all too apt a tag for the film.

Sitely satire needs to be based on the writer's extensive knowledge of his or her subject and an ability to satirise and dialogue with intense irony. Gordon may not know Keynes from Keating – or Christ from Crowley, for that matter – but Duncan should have to give audiences genuine insights and thus give weight to his themes (and not just to his humour).

Performances don't help, but how could they, with this material? Kate's written as an insipid urban career girl, Grace as a neurotic featherhead nymphomaniac and Gordon as an overblown caricature of a perverted prude and watch for Kerry Walker's cameo as a voracious politicine (with diploma). There's some scope for Shorkighorn to develop more complex and Wenham, who's a refreshing new big screen lead and who has remarkably palpable presence, does his best to avoid a nasty professor *schtick*. But the script is woefully inadequate to his talent.

Duncan's work gives the impression of having ventured but, for now, it's too much of a leap to The Emperor's New Clothes.

DIANE COOK

THE SOUND OF ONE HAND CLAPPING

DIRECTED BY RICHARD FLANAGAN. PRODUCED BY TORY KITTLES. EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS: STEVE VIZARD, ANDREW KNIGHT. JACK O'SULLIVAN. SCREENWRITER: RICHARD FLANAGAN. DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: MARTIN MCGRATH. EDITOR: JOHN SCOTT. TAK A NEHVE. PRODUCTION DESIGNER: HAYES PERRIN. COMPOSER: CEZARY SKUBISZEWSKI. CAST: KERRY FOX (SONIA BUTOH), KRIS MARSZAMAREK (DOJAN BUTOH), RUSH FLANAGAN (SOEJA ACEK), MELITA JURIC (MARA BULOH), JACEK KOMAR (POTTY), EVELYNE KREE (JEEJE). AUSTRALIAN DISTRIBUTOR: PALACE. 35MM. AUSTRALIA. 93 MINS.

The film Richard Flanagan has adapted from his own novel was his own screenplay, begins and ends symmetrically with vast panning shots of sunrise beauty. In between, the film deals in some very painful asymmetries of personal experiences.

"I've had a hard fucking life", says 36-year-old Sonia Buloh (Kerry Fox), when she returns to the Tasmanian Highlands where she grew up until she left her drunken, violent Slovenian father, Bojan (Kris of Kaczmarek), to live in Sydney. She returns organised, twenty years later, with a view to piecing together the facts of the past, perhaps to arrive at some rapprochement with her father.

The central fact of her life has been her desertion by her mother, Maria (Melita Juric) on a bitter winter night when she was three ("Can I come?" Lis dark in here and I'm scared," she remembers pleading) – and she's never to accept why she is, she must try to understand what led up to this traumatic moment, not seeing, as the artist Atrile Flinn and she's sitting on a hillside with her own daughter, also called Maria, saying, "This used to be my home, Maria", while the camera pans as it did in the opening sequence.

The Sound of One Hand Clapping avoids linear realism in its treatment of its grim narrative. Flanagan, directing for the first time, cuts between the past and the present, between here and now, between images of vast sweeping panoramas of daunting wildness and extreme revealing close-ups, and the magic power and resonance of the film owes much to his experienced collaborators, cinematographer Martin McGrath and editor John Scott.

The film addresses serious matters and gives them the vivid cinematic articulation that makes them seem serious here. Set in Tasmania in 1954, 1968 and 1989, it explores the intersection

between domestic upheaval and the political upheaval of war, both of which play the part in shaping the grinding life of Sonja Buloh. The truth of why her mother walks out in 1954 can not be understood in terms of what happened in Slovenia during the wartime years earlier, and the shot which reveals Maria's latest is one of the most shocking in the film. In terms of images, it has been prepared for by the close up of her red shoes descending the snowy steps of the mining camp cabin where she leaves Sonja in the dark. The latter's descent into drunken bullying needs to be placed in this context to be understood and the film's non linear procedures keep this hidden until near the end.

Part of the poignancy of the film lies in Sonja's need to believe that her parents were once happy, and for this kind of reassurance she turns to Jonja, the old family friend (played with lived in warmth and humour by Evelyn Krape) who offers non judgmental affection to Sonja, a woman who can barely say, "I'm proud of everything." It is a mark of the excellence of Kerry Fox's finely shaded performance as the adult Sonja that one accepts this grim appraisal of her life without feeling that it is nothing but self pity.

If the mother's defection is the act which compels the film, the relationship between Sonja and her father is its core. There are times when Flanagan seems to be indulging himself with a grotesquely visual rhetoric, but again and again he returns us to the central informing pain of this parent-child experience.

The film's other main thematic preoccupations with what used to be thought of as the "migrant problem" and the two mesh emotionally at the naturalization ceremony in which Buloh, holding the little Sonja, begins to sob uncontrollably while the local dignitary mounts on pompously about "the great gift of English civilization" and the promises of the new country for those from benighted Europe.

Sometimes this elements of cultural disparities is played for comedy, as in the hospital scene where Jonja replaces Sonja's appalling meat and two veg meal with bread thickly spread with garlic but comedy is scarce in the film and the truth of the alienated Slovene doesn't admit of much lightness. There are insert shots of Slovenian mountain scenery and moments of Buloh's pining over old photographs of trying to splice them together to make a happy family; there are alarming displays of drunken brutality and there is finally the very touching scene of Buloh's reconciliation with the heavily pregnant Sonja when he presents her with the future for her unborn child, made by himself in the ornate proto plastic style of his old country. The discourse on intercultural griefs and losses is as important and affecting as that on inter generational chasms of ignorance and pain.

Unrelentingly grim as much of it necessarily is, the film avoids being merely depressing. For one thing, its adventurous enough in its storytelling habits to offset possible charges of pretentiousness. It opts for a mosaic approach to narrative as it replaces bits of the past to help make sense of the present and the future; tolerable if counts on our making connections between the sweeping panoramas of the Tasmanian highlands and the cramped domestic interiors in which so much of the drama is enacted, between the repeated close ups of a broken heart and the bleakly unhappy face of the woman who has returned to see if she can put the pieces together again.

It is hard to see anything making a popular success of the film, though it would be wrong to be too hard on it. But its dark, finely processed, on demanding images have real intellectual and emotional rewards.

BRIAN McFARLANE

Michelle (Tom Collette) and Brett (David Wenham), *The Boys*.

THE BOYS

DIRECTED BY ROWAN WOODS. PRODUCERS ROBERT CONNOLLY, BINN MAYNARD. ASSOCIATE PRODUCER, DAVID WINNAM. EXECUTIVE PRODUCER DOUGLAS CUMMINGS. SCREENPLAY STEPHEN SEWELL. BASED UPON THE PLAY BY GORDON GRAHAM. DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY TRISTAN MILNE. EDITOR NICK MEYERS. PRODUCTION DESIGNER ELLEN PITTON. COSTUME DESIGNER ANNIE MARSHALL. SOUND DESIGNER SAM PETTY. MUSIC THE NECKS. CAST DAVID WINNAM (BRETT), TOM COLLETTE (MICHELLE), LYNETTE CURRAN (SANDRA), JOHN POLSON (GLEN), JEANETTE CRONIN (JACKIE), ANTHONY HAYES (STEVE), ANNA LISE (NOLA), PETER SMITH (GEORGE ABBOT). AUSTRALIAN DISTRIBUTOR THE GLOBE FILM COMPANY. FILMED IN AUSTRALIA, 1998, 84 MINS.

For a film based on a controversial stageplay which in turn was based on an autobiographic and well known true story, *The Boys* is a remarkably non sensational film. Where director Rowan Woods could have taken an obviously insubtle and therefore completely inappropriate line, he has instead opted for a more tactful and ultimately a more effective approach. His handling of the very difficult confronting and delicate material is to be admired and respected.

Brett Sprague (David Wenham) is released from prison after serving a twelve month sentence and returns to his family to find things not quite as he left them. Brother Glen (John Polson) has moved out with his girlfriend Jackie (Jeanette Cronin), younger brother Steve (Anthony Hayes) has his pregnant girlfriend Nola (Anna Lise) living with them and Brett's own girlfriend Michelle (Tom Collette) is there too, waiting for him to get out.

Sandra (Lynette Curran), Brett's mother, is obviously pleased to have Brett back at home and less pleased at some

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continued

thing of a family celebration in honour of the occasion. But not far behind the festive mood comes the inevitable familial tensions and arguments. Jackie would rather not spend too much time with Glen's family, she sees herself as better than them, and spends much of her time trying to "improve" Glen.

Stevie is less than happy with Nola – she was, after all, just a root he got up the duff. He'd rather she wasn't around, but see ing her family has disowned her she had nowhere else to go. And Michelle, eager to renew her relationship with Brett, has to deal with his suspicions of infidelity while he was inside, and his own altered behaviour.

Given the levels of tension brewing around the house, ably assisted by plenty of sitting around sinking piss, it's a foregone conclusion that something dreadful is going to happen. These fears are borne out in a series of flashes forward as we see the consequences of some unseen but obviously horrific act committed by the three brothers.

As a filmic device, these flashes forward are initially disorienting. Captioned "Eighteen hours later", "Three months later", and so on, it takes some time to recognize the pattern of these sequences. Once an understanding is established, however, they imbue the film with an unnerving but very effective sense of menace and the threat of violence. And this is where *The Boys* is quite a powerful film. The act – it is assumed that it is a violent one – is never seen, only hinted at, and is more effective as a result.

We spend much of the film dreading the fulfillment of the threat, and this is much more harrowing than any explicitly violent scenes could ever be, by allowing our imaginations to fill in the gaps. It also provides the audience a psychological escape hatch as well, just in case it does become too much to bear.

Much of the film's tens on, perhaps obviously, comes from the characters' relationships with each other, and the emotional battering they put themselves through, and the cast is well up to the challenge. As a whole they are incredibly strong, from Wenham, who puts in an impressively potent and disquieting performance as Brett, to Anna Lise playing the timid and broken Nola. Collette shows us that she is a versatile and very competent actor well able to deal with this heavier role, and Curran, as the desperate and downtrodden mother doing her best to keep faith in her boys, gives Sandra a lot of depth, and makes her variously pathetic, admirable and well out of her depth.

The Boys won't be to everyone's taste. Sometimes the camera work is too deliberate and studied, and the film's brooding atmosphere is at times overdone, but it is still a powerful affecting film that ably demonstrates how much more chilling suggestion and implication is than the blatant representation of physical violence.

TIM HUNTER

A THOUSAND ACRES

DIRECTED BY JOCELYN MOORHOUSE. PRODUCERS: MARC ABRAHAM, STEVE GOLIN, LYNN ARDIST, KATE GUINZBURG, SIGURJON SIGHVATSSON. SCRIPTWRITER: LAURA JONES, BASED ON THE NOVEL BY JANE SMILEY. DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY: TAK FUJIMOTO. PRODUCTION DESIGNER: DAN DAVIS. EDITOR: MARYANN BRANDON. COSTUME DESIGNER: RUTH MYERS. MUSIC: RICHARD HARTLEY. CAST: MICHELLE PFEIFFER (ROSE CODY LEWIS), JESSICA LANGE (GINNY COOK SMITH), JASON ROBARDS (LARRY COOK), JENNIFER JASON LEIGH (CAROLINE COOK), COLIN FIRTH (JESS CLARK), KEITH CARRADINE (TY SMITH). AUSTRALIAN DISTRIBUTOR: POLYGRAM. 35MM. USA. 1998. 105 MINS.

A Australian director Jocelyn Moorhouse hadn't read Jane Smiley's Pulitzer winning novel when she was asked by Jessica Lange and Michelle Pfeiffer and their separate production companies to direct this film. But when she heard it had similarities to Shakespeare's *King Lear* she was immediately intrigued.

A Thousand Acres is about a cantankerous old man with three grown up daughters, but it's also about a family who've never really grown up. The old man, Larry Cook (Jason Robards), is a widower who lives on his 1,000-acre farm in Iowa. Larry's two daughters also live on the farm with their husbands, and the youngest daughter lives in the city where she practices law and keeps her distance.

The catalyst for the story is Larry's impulsive decision to divide his land between the three daughters, and starts a shit fight that eventually brings the whole family undone. The oldest daughter, Ginny (Jessica Lange), is brave, beautiful and living in a marriage that has gone stale with age. Her husband, Ty (Keith Carradine), tries to work his way into the family by managing the farm. But the family is diseased at its core, and nothing Ginny the dutiful daughter or Ty her docile partner do will bring it right.

It's the middle sister, the impetuous, fragile Rose (Michelle Pfeiffer), who is recovering from breast cancer, who finally opens up the old wounds and forces Ginny to confront the horror of their childhood. Rose's husband, Pete (Kevin Anderson), is angry at the mess he has married into, and when an old charismatic handsome neighbour returns to town to flirt with the sisters once again, Pete's situation becomes intolerable.

The youngest daughter, Caroline (Jennifer Jason Leigh), is the most enigmatic of the three sisters. She has been away for most of his adult life, and returns to the farm with different values and a tolerance for her father's erratic cruel actions that suffocates the others. Like Lear's Cordelia, she takes pity on her father, and the old man clings to her like a stranded puppy. The catharsis, when it comes, is bloody and uncompromising, and leaves the protagonists with no real way out.

The performances in *A Thousand Acres* are rivetting, especially Jessica Lange and Michelle Pfeiffer who bring a compelling poignancy to their rôles as sisters. But the drifter, Jess Clarke (Colin Firth), is less than convincing. Firth's lines and his acting don't give him enough reason to be there at all, and his presence takes away some of the film's authenticity.

I haven't read the novel, and maybe now on seeing this film I should. Even though *A Thousand Acres* is dealing with the most fundamental questions of families, inheritance, love and betrayal, Laura Jones' screenplay and Moorhouse's directing tend to overblow the drama into something close to melodrama at times. The film has none of the shades of grey or absurdity of Moorhouse's first American film, *How To Make An American Quilt* (1996), which despite the bleakness still had an Australian unpredictability at its heart.

The cinematography of *A Thousand Acres* is beautiful, but never gritty or real to the point that it hurts. The whole film is very accomplished and it will be noticed and talked about, but it probably won't be remembered in the next millennium.

MARGARET SMITH

Larry Cook (Jasse Robards) and Caroline Cook (Jennifer Jason Leigh). *A Thousand Acres.*

Books

TALL, DARK AND GRUESOME

Christopher Lee: Tall, Dark and Handsome. pp 316, rrp $39.95

Christopher Lee's extensive film movie career was indubitably dictated by the grotesque and the fantastic. His exceptional height – he is 6 foot 4 inches (193cm) – landed him rôles as Frankenstein's creature, as oriental Fu Manchu and in countless resurrections of Dracula: that noble leech of Transylvania. As Bond villain Salamanca in *The Man With The Golden Gun* (Guy Hamilton, 1974), Lee was equipped with a third nipple, a dwarf sidekick (Herve Villechaize) and a gun constructed from cufflink, cigarette lighter and fountain pen.

Now 76 years old, Christopher Carandini Lee has put pen to paper. His autobiography, *Tall Dark and Gruesome*, reveals a life that has seen more than its share of the macabre. In addition, Lee's fate has been ruled by 'unnatural' height and unplaceable 'foreign looks', both of which led to his inevitable submersion in the modern day grotesque of the horror film genre.

Born in England of Australian, Italian and Anglo stock, Lee's father trained Australian troops in Egypt, commanding them "the following year in the shambles that was the Somme", while his mother, née the Contessa Estelle Marie Carandini, was born in Sydney, the granddaughter of two generations of opera singers who performed in Hobart, on the goldfields of Bendigo and Queensland, and worked as dance instructors at Sydney Cove.

In London and on the continent, while Lee's family socialized with exiled Russian nobility, Lee collected languages like toys and was woken in the middle of the night to shake hands with Prince Yusopoff and Grand Duke Dimitri, the assassins of Rasputin.

After attending a British public school that "made Lindsay Anderson's *If...* (1968) look like cinema verité", Lee moved comfortably into a Parisian boarding house with yet more exiled Russian aristocrats. On a dare, Lee lived to regret, he attended the last public execution in France. Hosted by Madame Guillotine, it has given him lifelong nightmares...

In 1941, Lee returned to England and joined the Royal Airforce. He never flew. While the war was fought around him, Lee was grounded in peaceful Rhodesia, his men going crazy with boredom and the officers mad with quinine.

In the last days of the war, he witnessed the horrifying bloodbath that was the liberation of Sicily, slept through a German attack that came within 50 yards, and on Armistice Day watched helplessly as a friend burnt to death from the inside after he was hit by a flare fired in celebration of war's end.

Serving on the Central Register of War Crimes and Security Suspects, Lee was among the first allies to enter the horrors of Auschwitz, before returning dressed from head to toe in dead men's clothes, to bombed and dismal London.

In the first of a series of extraordinary and seemingly miraculous serendipities (most of which occurred throughout his career), on the same golf course, Lee convinced his mother that he should become an actor.

After seeing Conrad Veidt in *The Spy in Black* (Michael Powell, 1939), the 24-year-old Lee voiced his intentions to his mother at the ninth hole. Before Mrs Lee could protest, Conrad Veidt himself miraculously stepped out of a nearby sand-bunker and rallied to Lee's defence. He so charmed Mrs Lee that she was convinced of acting as a respectable profession.

The combination of Lee's height, his dark pallor and sunken eyes ensured some unimaginative casting at the newly formed Rank Organisation, where Lee became a bit player. This combined with Lee's over zealous portrayals of some minor death scenes, saw him shunted deep into the background.

Only after his performance as Australian Bernard Day in *Scott of the Antarctic* (Charles Frend, 1948) was Lee noticed. At Hammer House of Horror in the late 1950s, '60s, and early '70s, Lee stepped into the shoes of Basil Rathbone's Sherlock Holmes, Boris Karloff's monster and mummy as well as Lugosi's vampire, the rôle that was to make him famous. The rest, as they say, is history.

Of all the names dropped throughout this life, it is in his friendship with Boris Karloff that Lee evokes sympathy. Like Lee, Karloff was an outsider, towered well over six feet, was born of Anglo Indian parentage and was often mistaken as Romany.

They were 'types' concluded Karloff, and typecasting meant that they would always be in work. But it was Karloff who warned Lee that while he could step into another's shoes, he should never let those shoes wear him. Lee concludes that, since they "both knew what it was to be monsters", he was destined to follow in Karloff's "painful and childlike footsteps".

MICHAEL KITSON

STANLEY KUBRICK
A BIOGRAPHY

Vincent LoBrutto. 1997. Donald Fine Books.

Although many fine books about director Stanley Kubrick have been published over the years, notably *Kubrick* by Michel Ciment and *The Cinema of Stanley Kubrick* by Norman Kagan, Vincent LoBrutto's *Stanley Kubrick: A Biography* is just that: a biography. Unlike previous publications, it is neither a criticism nor an analysis of his work in motion pictures, but is, in fact, the first true biography.

LoBrutto emphasizes Kubrick's roots both as a New Yorker and as a stills photographer – photography being the very basis of Kubrick's career. Had Kubrick not been a director, undoubtedly he would have been a renowned stills photographer.

Like most film director bios, this book is structurally conventional, broken into three acts which consist of Kubrick's beginnings, his films in order of production and a speculation on the future. Unlike pilot biographies, it neither condemns nor praises Kubrick, choosing instead to leave this to the reader's own sense of morality. This is the book's strength.

Largely researched in New York, LoBrutto gives insights into two of Kubrick's most formative experiences. First, his life prior to his departure to make his motion pictures in England and second, Kubrick's *Paths of Glory* (1957).

After an apprenticeship in stills photography, working in the late 1940s for *Look* magazine and there being little or no New York film industry, Kubrick decided to make his own films. They were totally self financed.

The beginnings of his independent film persona were two shorts *Day of the Fight* and *The Flying Parade*. These were followed closely by two features *Fear and Desire* (1953) and *Killer's Kiss* (1955). The latter proved to be Kubrick's first excursion into film noir. They were not a financial success.

Kubrick's chance meeting with producer James B. Harris gained him a partner and led to *The Killing* in 1956, a self styled robbery/gangster film, shamelessly ripped-off by Tarantino for his *Reservoir Dogs* (1992). Still modest by Hollywood terms, *The Killing* was Kubrick's calling card to the studios, who were suitably impressed, most notably Kirk Douglas, who was in the midst of starting his own production company.

For their next project, Kubrick and Harris were rejected by nearly every major studio. *Paths of Glory* was considered anti war in a time of strong American jingoism surrounding Korea. An actor with clout, Kirk Douglas stepped in and struck a deal with United Artists to distribute, believing the film had to be made, "yet won't make a nickel".

The price? A five-picture deal for Kubrick. Harris which would prove fatal to their partnership on *Spartacus* (1960). An interesting point is made that Kubrick made *Spartacus* under contract rather than as other books would have us believe. Kirk Douglas begging Kubrick to help out in an emergency.

Spartacus is the turning point in Kubrick's career – his only production for which he had no control in script and actors. Although only 30 years old, Kubrick pulled off the gigantic production despite crew and personality clashes with Douglas and cinematographer Russel Metty.

After this production of "compromise" on Kubrick's behalf, he returned to his state of film independence.

From *Dr Strangelove or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb* (1964) to the now-in-post-production *Eyes Wide Shut*, all Kubrick films bear the title "A Stanley Kubrick Production", being director, scriptwriter and co-producer. Auteur at last? A bitter yet valuable lesson learnt from *Spartacus* to oversee all further productions.

KEVIN JANNER

CINEASTE

Cineaste has long been of one of the most interesting film magazines in English. Too long it has been pigeonholed for its left-wing politics, when its real strength is the quality of its writers and their contributions.

In the latest issue (Vol XXIII No. 2) one finds a fascinating analysis of Pressburger and Powell's work by Raymond Durgnat (who has never not been fascinating), pieces on Mike Leigh and Charles Burnett, an essential overview on recent books on the Hollywood blacklist era and Jonathan Rosenbaum's look at several of the recent national cinema documentaries (but, sadly, not the Australian).

This issue is an absolute must – but then so is every issue of *Cineaste*.

S M

Books Received

A&E ENTERTAINMENT ALMANAC 1998

Beth Rower. Editor, Information Please LLC, Boston. 1997. 808 pp. $23.95

AMISTAD

Alex Patz, Penguin Books Ltd, Middlesex, 1997. 314pp., $12.95

BLACK MUTINY

William A. Owens, Penguin Books, New York, 1997. 322 pp. $17.95

DIRECTOR'S CUT

John Waters, Scalo, Zurich, 1997. 288 pp., $99.00

THE FILMS OF PETER GREENAWAY

Amy Lawrence, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1997. 225 pp., $25.95

MEDIA MANUAL
FILM TECHNOLOGY IN POST PRODUCTION

Dominic Case. Butterworth-Heinemann Australia, 1997. 192 pp., $39.95

PETER GREENAWAY
MUSEUMS AND MOVING IMAGES

Dave Pascoe, Reaktion Books, London 1997. 242 pp. $45.00

WARNER CINEMAS
AN OUTLINE HISTORY

Philip Turner, Branthwood Books, Kent UK, 1997. 38pp., £9.95

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it'd also be over in a flash. Rather than you, the director, trying to make it into something by selling the actors your concept or interpretation and explaining how it could work, try "Scene Stretch".

Set up the table and chair where A is seated and locate the door B will enter through. Allow A to sit there before you signal B to enter. As he sits waiting for the scene to begin, "Scene Stretch" could go something like this.

Director: Deal with the fact B is taking a long time to return.

After a few moments of silence, B looks to the door, back to the table, he then stretches with slight discomfort, and sits back.

Director: Keep dealing with the fact A has been gone a long time and know he holds your future in his hands.

Once this thought has truly dropped in and made contact with A, he now leans forward and places his elbows on the table and rests his head on his hands. His growing preoccupation at his predicament leads him to rub his forehead.

Director: Stronger choice.

A begins to move his fingers across his face as if removing air bubbles trapped under his skin.

Director: Stronger Choice.

A now pushes his hands through his hair attempting to relieve the mounting tension. The more he massages his scalp the longer he appears to have been waiting and the stakes begin to soar.

You now have a pre-life to the scene and a strong starting point.

The director now signals to B who enters. He stands at the end of the table.

Director: Contact.

A and B look at each other across the room, eye to eye, no words. A wonders what fate may be in store for him, B wonders whether A has decided to co-operate or to cause trouble. He sees the time spent alone has unsettled A. Now each man's thinking is entirely about the other person. A relationship is developing – that is, two people are in *relation* to each other. This is the first stage of true listening and reacting, for both actors aren't trying to prove they can 'act' the scene, nor to get it 'right'. They are simply 'in' the scene and 'in' each moment as it comes upon them. From this connection an atmosphere is developing which both actors sense. B now walks around the table.

Character B: I don't hold out much hope for you.

Director: Stronger choice.

Character B walks towards Character A and places his hands upon the table, as if taunting him.

Character B: I don't hold out much hope for you.

The taunt leads B to emphasize the word "you" as if he is demeaning A through the taunt.

Director: Stronger Choice.

B leans in close to A and, almost whispering, gives himself more power and domination over A, who leans back slightly due to B's physical threat.

Character B: I don't hold out much hope for you.

A and B are now quite close – B in control, A seemingly on the back foot.

A slightly laughs it off, trying to show that B hasn't affected him as much as he obviously has.

Character A: I wouldn't trust you as far as I could throw you.

Director: Different choice.

Character A [*shouting with fear and anger*]: I wouldn't trust you as far as I could throw you!

Director: Different choice.

Character A [*nervous, shaking*]: I wouldn't trust you as far as I could throw you.

Director: Different choice!

A pauses slightly, then leans forward, his hands back on the table – regaining lost ground and almost confronting B.

Character A: I wouldn't trust you as far as I could throw you.

Director: Stronger choice now.

A leans further towards B now in an act of direct defiance. He speaks slowly and carefully so as to avoid any confusion.

Character A: I wouldn't trust you ... as far as I could throw you.

Director: Contact.

A and B now stare at each other – breathing hard into each other's faces – the silent aggression between the two adversaries is powerfully evident.

B grabs A by the front of his jacket.

Character B: More the fool you.

Director: Stronger choice.

B picks A up by his jacket and standing face to face.

Character B: More the fool you.

Director: Stronger choice.

B pushes A away from the table and jamming him up against the wall – silence – then with a steely defiance.

Character B: More the fool you.

B releases his grip on A and they hold contact for a few tense seconds. B then turns to exit, leaving A in a no win situation. A can feel his options diminish and any hope vanish.

Director [*to A*]: Deal with the fact B thinks he's won.

Character A [*almost yelling*]: Why? Because I won't play your games? I'm not that stupid.

Director: Stronger choice!

A stumbles forward, now shouting at B in mock defiance, calling his bluff and playing his last hand.

Character A: Why? Because I won't play your games? [*Laughs.*] I'm not that stupid!

B now has A right where he wants him. Without taking the bait, B exits the room.

Character B: Suit yourself.

The door slides shut leaving A alone – helpless and defenceless, knowing he now has no options available to him and the hand of justice and retribution is about to fall.

Director: Cut.

"Scene Stretch" has helped both actors to explore a detailed relationship: the status between the two characters, the shifts in power, and also has uncovered a possible main event for the scene – a conclusion. It has also allowed both actors to find opposite moments for their characters, extending the range thereby covering more terrain.

This is only one possible version of this five-line scene. This interpretation was obviously controlled by the director's side-coaching. Or was the director simply triggered by what he saw happening between the two actors? And did he, therefore, merely give each actor the opportunity to explore the moment's full extent? No one is in 'control' as such, as "Scene Stretch" is a collaborative exercise where *both* actors and director lead and follow resulting in the scene becoming charged – charged with impact and meaning. Both actors and director run with where the scene leads them – the scene is each person's focus, the side coaching simply helps lift it into a sharper focus.

After doing an exercise such as this it becomes almost immediately obvious whether the creative team are on the right track or not. The interpretation found above may be too charged, too confrontational for this stage of the film. If so, everyone now knows exactly what to explore – undercurrents, the 'not knowing', the subtlety of power play, both characters unsure of what will trigger the other to give them what they want. The beauty of the exercise is that it elicits the exact sort of concise conversation that leads toward cracking the scene. This occurs when the scene is allowed to be exactly what the film needs it to be to propel the story forward.

Once again, the exercise detailed in the previous issue and this exercise promote practical and effective use of rehearsal time. They circumnavigate those conversations that actors dread – conversations where the talk defeats purpose, when discussion confuses any clarity, and the time wasted foils any attempt at concise action.

The actor's hunch is best activated on the floor, not in comfortable chairs – in action, not in conjecture.

You'll find in a longer scene that the side-coaching will reduce as the scene finds its feet and the actors find their target. It's a tool to help unlock an atmosphere and to promote an array of choices that, once revealed, will flow instinctively.

Note: When side-coaching, make sure you are close to the action and that you feel a part of the action. If you side-coach objectively or technically it will feel a hindrance to the scene. Jump in fast with "Contact". Feel the moment of tension build and be ready to call out 'Stronger Choice" or "Different Choice" the moment the scene continues. As the scene begins to take care of itself, "Contact" may be the only side-coach you need – as this will allow both actors the opportunity to revel in the power of what is happening between them, and for them to precisely feel the adventure before them.

Regarding each actor, make sure they stay inside the scene at all times and do not look toward you during the side-coach. This is another reason why you need to be up to speed with them. The side-coach should allow them to keep in character and each instruction should fuel their next moment.

Next issue: We will explore an exercise that helps to pinpoint what issues are involved in the scene – and how by highlighting different atmospheric dynamics, the world of the scene becomes richer and more detailed. It will also help actors to remember exactly what they did that made the scene so effective!

(The exercise above was originally designed by director Gale Edwards in 1984 and entitled "Referee Impro".)

I know we have an industry representation on the board. However, that causes another problem...the non-industry board members create a serious imbalance at board meetings because they tend to look to the one or two "industry experienced" members as to how they should vote. Thus a tremendous amount of power and responsibility is routinely given over to one or two people when the decision votes are made.

Who should be on the board? Look at film organizations in Australia...such as the AFI, AFC, Film Victoria...or the South Australian Film Corporation; they all have boards made up almost entirely of industry members. Who is better informed about "the industry" than the people who work in it? It must be working well because their film industry is in a far healthier state than ours. It's time to get rid of the government-appointed seat fillers on our Film Commission board and replace them all with industry practitioners who demonstrate a passion, understanding and commitment to filmmaking.

The NZFC's official excuse for the existing levels of film ignorance at board level is that the board doesn't have to know much, it can simply act on the recommendations of the talented, well-informed NZFC staff. Oh, dear. In previous years board practice has been to exclude staff from meetings because the levels of mistrust between board and staff meant they could not function in the same room!

We've all known the NZFC staff for years, and criticizing them is difficult. It's like saying something bad about one's benign old auntie or uncle. Let's just say that it's time for fresh blood. Some key NZFC staff members have become far too institutionalized.

Most international film funding bodies have a staff turnover every two to three years. It is seen as an essential part of maintaining good client relations, and ensures that favouritism and cronyism do not have a chance to flourish. The NZFC staff need an injection of imagination, vitality and initiative that is long overdue. It has been my experience that advice and expertise in the vital areas of script development, film budgeting, film financing and deal making are sadly lacking in the current regime.

Support for our writers in particular has been woefully inadequate. Script development skills are so vital; they are the foundation of our film industry. So much could be done to nurture, train and support our screen writers, but virtually nothing happens. Instead, the Writers Guild is told by NZFC staff that action scripts should be cheaper than drama scripts because there are less lines of dialogue to write!

One of the most ill-conceived NZFC staff "initiatives" has been the implementation of the Low Budget Feature Film Programme. This has resulted in the NZFC becoming majority investors in the production of tele-features. Both NZ On Air and the TV broadcaster have complete veto rights over script, and world sales rights are handled by Portman/Pinnacle. It should be noted that Portman, which the NZFC publicizes as a "theatrical sales" company, has, for the most part, sold television.

The writers, producers, directors, actors and crews are being expected to work for low rates whilst "executive producers" and "Low Budget co-ordinators" pocket sizeable fees. But criticize the Low Budget Scheme, and the chairman will tell you: "It provides an opportunity for filmmakers to tell stories of significant length to develop their skills."

I know from experience how vital a filmmaker's first feature is to one's career. You have to create a splash with few resources at your disposal. Fail to do so, and it is likely you will never make another film. I think it is a tragedy that NZFC policy is steering our talented young filmmakers into tele feature débuts.

It is an indictment of the existing Film Commission that they do not possess the initiative to devise a "Low Budget Scheme" that results in stories being told for cinema rather than television. In fact, in a wider context, this philosophy directly contravenes the spirit of the Film Commission Act which was set up to nurture and develop indigenous feature films for the theatrical marketplace.

NZ On Air funds television. In this country – why is the NZFC intending to throw millions of our valuable feature film dollars at the small screen? Because it's cheaper, they cry. This way we can get, in Ruth Harley's words, "more bangs for our bucks". In other words, we can be seen to be turning out more product for less money and doesn't that reflect well on everyone? I think the CEO needs to divest herself of a TV mind set and start to focus on the unique qualities of New Zealand cinema.

This current NZFC obsession with "low-budget films" results in an expectation that actors and technicians will subsidize its activities. It leaves little doubt in my mind that the NZFC has lost touch with the real cost of film-making in 1997.

I wish there was some light at the end of the tunnel. With Ruth Harley's appointment, there was a widespread optimism within the industry. Eight months later, that optimism has now turned to disappointment. Very little has changed and the status quo appears to be firmly in place. We get statements from the chairman about "a fundamental structural review" of the NZFC that is supposed to be going on. I find it hard to believe that any meaningful change will come from within when the organisation is stuffed with career bureaucrats who are reluctant to rock the boat.

At this time, the film industry desperately needs dynamic leadership to affect nothing less than a total reinvention of the NZFC. It is clear to me that we need an immediate, massive overhauling of our Film Commission. We must formulate constructive suggestions for change and lobby government and The Lotteries Board. The New Zealand Film Commission has to be taken apart and rebuilt from the ground up. We do not want it abolished, we want it re-organized.

Why can't we have an NZFC board consisting entirely of industry members? Why can't we have an NZFC staff populated by people with a vibrant energy, talent and initiative, staff who communicate effectively with the board...a Film Commission that has intelligent, effective policies, a Film Commission that treats all applicants with a basic level of consistency and fair process, a Film Commission that produces cinema, not television?

This has been hard stuff to write as my career is entirely due to the early support of the NZFC and a big part of me wants to celebrate the 20th anniversary along with everybody else. What I will be celebrating are the friendships that I have made along the way, in particular the late Jim Booth, a key figure in both the early NZFC and my career.

However, when I think of how many people have put so much energy into making movies in New Zealand over the past 20 years, I think we have earned the right to a better Film Commission than the misguided, directionless, self-protecting, inward-looking body that currently controls our filmmakers. ●

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Telluride in a state of deep depression.

Five years later I was invited to return to Telluride, which gave me the chance to apologize. I did. Not for what I had said, but for the extremely bad timing of the event.

My first full feature, *Illuminations* [1976], was produced by Tibor Markus, whom I'd met during *Don Quixote* [1973]. When not making movies, Tibor ran a wholesale business in cakes, but his heart and soul were in the movies. Tibor was passionate about everything he did, except his cake business. We had less than $20,000 to make a feature and needed all the help we could get. Tibor went around exchanging cakes for small or big favours. He inspired enormous enthusiasm in total outsiders with his charm and thick Hungarian accent. Once, while shooting miles away in the country, I mentioned that it would be nice to have a peacock standing by.

Within an hour Tibor had arrived with a peacock under his arm and a big grin on his face. The next day a large wild stallion appeared because the script required a horse. Tibor was one step ahead of everyone and everything, including himself.

We were looking for the male lead and, as I had very little knowledge or involvement in the performing arts, I left it up to Tibor to find the right man. One night he assured me enthusiastically that I was going to meet a great talent called Tony Llewellyn-Jones. Tony arrived that night. We tried to explain the script which nobody understood, including me, and he said yes, he would do it. Many years later he told me that when Tibor rang him, he was convinced that Tibor was involved in pornographic movies and that he only responded because of basic curiosity.

After completion of the film, dear Tibor died in his sleep.

Tony became a wonderful collaborator, actor, producer, politician and friend. Together we established Illumination Films and throughout the past fifteen years we've worked together – sometimes separately for a year or two, but always returning to base. Without people like Tony and Norman [Kaye], it would have been impossible to continue. Not to mention Bill Marshall, my lawyer and scrounger of finances, and Jim

Khong who was, and always will be, more than a brother

Our instincts seek human identity, and art, as they say, is a step towards the infinite But to me the core of art is vision and kindness Through vision we find divine origin in the sea, the sky, a single leaf, a drop of rain And kindness brings us closer to the child, closer to the gods These gods don't always need to be divine The primitive, private passion of Zorba the Greek, for instance, is also part of the core of art Romantic old fool dancing on the beach, knowing everything about life It's all so simple But what are we without him? It's so much better to run into Zorba's hairy arms than to escape into the disco halls, wearing Pierre Cardin's underpants To snuggle into Zorba's smelly armpits than to join the beautiful people splashing in the unpleasant, artificial blue of private swimming pools

Australia doesn't really have its own film industry because we shy away from our identity and the people who could reflect this identity Our best known filmmakers, like Peter Weir, Fred Schepisi and Bruce Beresford, had to go abroad If they hadn't, they would have suffered total alienation and their experience and technical brilliance would sadly have been wasted

People with a recognized body of work are treated with a great degree of suspicion Producers can produce one turkey after another, but, once a director fails, he or she is in big trouble But these are the people who, in the end, actually make the movie Usually these people have very vulnerable hearts, and battle their insecurity as much as anyone else — usually more so Is it any wonder that these insecurities manifest themselves sometimes in arrogance and a ridiculous sense of superiority?

When it became known that I'd accepted to make a film in 3D for the IMAX Corporation, I received several stunned reactions. One came from a struggling filmmaker in Germany "I'm deeply disappointed You're one of the few who kept me wanting to continue — who remained independent and didn't sell out Why do something so blatantly commercial now?"

There's nothing "blatantly commercial" about *The Hidden Dimension*. Ulli Beier wrote a book, *Ten Thousand Years in a Lifetime*, about Albert Maori kiki, a New Guinean who'd travelled from the Stone Age to the New Guinea parliament in half a century. Why, then, couldn't I travel from my rubber-band factory to the very latest in film technology? It also coincided with a desire to work outside of Australia, to get away from a bureaucracy that was making it more and more difficult to keep being a filmmaker

The Hidden Dimension wasn't a call from Hollywood The producers were dedicated, talented people who were very idealistic about their movie and gave me much trust.

It has been said that all activity of man begins as dream and then becomes dream once more The painter Giorgio de Chirico said that his life, and thus his dreams, were always three-dimensional, and claimed to paint in 3D When I accepted the IMAX challenge, I remembered de Chirico's bold statement I stood for many hours in front of his paintings, sometimes with wide open eyes, sometimes with half closed eyes, sometimes closed eyes I saw no 3D forthcoming. But de Chirico led me back to Vermeer With chalk lines, Vermeer achieved what I now see as 'perfect perspective' The very key to the magic of 3D

We were trying to film an ordinary story with ordinary people The IMAX three-dimensional format would make it extraordinary The film is about a quest undertaken by a young girl – as set by her grandfather – to encourage her to see more deeply into life The 'hidden dimension' refers to the millions of microscopic life forms which share our lives as another universe It was very important to make the people feel and look real. Any 3D distortion would cheapen the film

The idea of perfect perspective at first seemed impossible The camera had to 'dance' as well, and how do you make a camera dance when you need four people to carry the bloody thing? In addition to its clumsiness, this camera is a real beast which still hasn't been tamed It growls so loudly that in small spaces the actors can't even hear one another speak Endless patience, endless rehearsals, endless technical challenges Our three protagonists, Charlotte Sullivan, Gosia Dobrowolska and C David Johnson, persevered, remained cool, and stood their ground

The IMAX format gives us images that are immensely beautiful We are guided into an extraordinary world where the eye can travel, explore, find poetry It has all the signs of being the great new medium for the twenty first century. It is a glorious medium which draws us right inside the picture There is nothing virtual about this reality.

Of course, our approach caused a few frowns amongst the IMAX hierarchy. Barbara Kerr, John Larkin, Margot Wiburd and myself endlessly rewrote the script I'd never worked in an atmosphere of such insecurity The man in charge wanted the script to be snappy 3D is not a snappy medium. I tried to shoot our film in such a way that little could be done to destroy its heart

I was warned that to work with a large crew and many technicians would be difficult, but I found the whole process most rewarding The production team and I were on the same wave length, all we had to do was stay away from the experts in Armani suits The film was almost unanimously well received, with great critical acclaim IMAX produced a special brochure citing all the marvellous reviews This was apparently too much for our executive officer, who wrote an amazing article in the IMAX magazine to justify his belief that the film "wasn't what the audience wanted" He started by saying, "People are human and therefore make mistakes" The title was wrong. It was he who chose the title "Four Million House Guests", not me *The Hidden Dimension* was my choice.

Further, the pace was too slow, according to various surveys Yet he'd also discovered that audience satisfaction was very high He was committed to releasing films that "have broad appeal, satisfy a theatre's mandate and deliver at the box office" Yet "a film that stimulates the audience's senses and challenges each person to view his or her surroundings with open eyes and an open mind has enormous value" How can one compete with an ego of such contradictions? An audience – especially an audience of children – needs to be respected. They need to be allowed to interpret the story themselves, find their own dreams

Reflections An Autobiographical Journey *(rrp $29 95 pb) is published by Currency Press and will be launched in May at the Sydney Writers' Festival Currency is simultaneously publishing* Three Screenplays Lonely Hearts, My First Wife and A Woman's Tale, *at $24 95 (pb)*

Sisters Rnan and Lili Li both hunger after the same village boy, Zheng Junli Ruan of course sacrifices herself bnt, once married sister Lili goes off to Shanghai to train as a teacher and takes up with a fellow westernized student She claims it is Ruan who lusts after him When they return to the village, not only is Zheng clearly old news, but the tunic wearing schoolgirls start ignoring their stridies and dressing flash in the manner of new school m'am Lili Meanwhile, her dad is making a bundle selling real estate for new developments However the old headmistress address to the KMT meeting restores everyone's perspective All this comes complete with attractive framing scenes of a steamer trip and blotchy wipe transitions

Rnan emerges plausibly from these and another fragment on show

The retrospective showcased director Sun Yu, who involuntarily achieved a special place in history when Mao s denunciation of one of his '50s films brought to an end "the Hundred Flowers" period liberalizations

Here, however we see him in full thrust, with the exotic melodrama *Blood of Love* (*Huoshan Quong Xue* 1932), which is closer to Monogram than to Von Sternberg

In China, Zheng Junli's happy family is thrown into chaos when the mean local boss demands his sister as concubine Upon refusal, he has them arrested and it looks as if she will submit, to spring them from the gaol, conveniently next to the heavy s balcony, from which she hurls herself to her death when sure they are free Zhen overturns the family alter years later, in the South Pacific.

The later part of the film is startling set in a studio tropical hell hole hotel where a dwarf referees boxing matches and sailors knife fight and chew on entire smoked ducks Our hero is now 'The Man Who Never Smiles" but the bad guy shows up and puts moves on hula-dancing Lili Li (with Zhen In *National Style*) precipitating a fight on the slopes of one of those silent movie volcanos out of whose mouth the props men throw papier mache rocks That s entertainment!

Even more rousing is another Sun Yu, *Wild Rose* (*Ye Meigui*, 1932) This time, it's *La Bohème* via Frank Borzage again complete with one of the director's signature camera cranes up flights of stairs.

Star 16-year-old Wang Renmi has to fall back on childhood friend Jin Yan when her fisherman dad rather than submit to blackmail, burns their barge home and abruptly disappears. Jin's family takes a dim view of this roughly dressed country girl and rather than abandon her, he moves into a garret enjoying a poor but happy existence However, he falls ill and desperate to buy medicine, she picks up a drunk's wallet only to precipitate the arrival of a policeman Jin is arrested and the only way Wang can save her beloved is to renounce him.

Stylishly played and staged, stretching its thin budget, this is as good as any of the Shanghai films we've seen – Sun Yu also did the more familiar *The Big Road* (*Dalub* 1934) – and deserves much wider exposure.

Less plausible is an enthusiasm for Cai Chusheng, whose silents prove a dodgy lot In the 1932 *Spring in the South* (*Nanguo Zhi Chun*) another heart-throb, Guo Zhanfei, is one of the impoverished students playing cigar box mandolins in the SCG boarding house He becomes enamoured of Chen Yanyang, the girl whose balcony faces theirs, and throws her a love note say ing the postman misdirected it. They court, but his dying father insists he go through with the arranged marriage with the daughter of the family who financed his studies By the time he gets all that sorted out, Chen is implausibly exhorting him, from her deathbed, to go fight the country's enemies

Cai's *Song of the Fishermen* (*Yu Guang Qu* 1934) is even rougher, complete with early synchronized score produced on the first local apparatus Mum ignores her own kids to wet nurse the rich boy who rushes in to tell her mother is dead There are lots of double exposures as mum staggers around, smashing an expensive pot, which gets her expelled from the home She goes blind and the rich boy's dad abandoned by his flighty wife, runs off with young Wang Renmei (from *Wild Rose*) The boy grown up, takes over the family s fishing fleet only to be on hand for the fatal accident when poor Wang's brother (Han Lan'gen, playing straight) succumbs, remembering the fisherman song they learned as children

If you're sitting there muttering these Chinese films all have the same story, don't think you're the first one to notice The Pordenone viewers were getting distinctly restless as each new lot of heartless parents rejected the simple country girls chosen by soppy heroes Whether this reflects the hundreds of films made at the period or is a product of the random survival and archival selection process has yet to be established

To give some variety, the programme included a couple of the trash action films made in imitation of the U S serials of the day

Particularly ripe is *Cry of Apes In the Deserted Valley* (*Kung Gu Yuan Sheng*) Made in 1930 by Ma Xu Weibang director of the famous "Phantom of the Opera" imitation, *Midnight Songs*, he brings an incoherent energy to a story which has a fez-wearing master criminal, who the plot places in two spots at the same time, abducting the horse riding heroine by the use of devil apes ("Oh, Buddha! My precious daughter has been carried off by a gorilla!") Rats in the chandelier, a plaster cave with caged girls, characters who are not what they seem – it's doubtful that it would have made any more sense if they found the missing reels

Also on show was *Heroine of the Wild River* (*Huang Jiang Nuxia*, 1931), made by Chen Kengran and Shang Guanwu This was revealing, being a martial arts adventure, the cycle with which Chinese film would be particularly associated in years to come

Heroine belongs to a series following a hero c brother and sister befriending the locals in their battles with a giant bird-man and a golden eagle which first shows up as special effects silhouette, changing scale sharply when it is tamed and sitting on the sister's shoulder Intriguingly she is the featured character and we follow her challenge by the local barbell-lifting bandit queen

Despite their sword wielding and cliff scaling leaps, this lot, in their baggy padded jackets have none of the rich opera imagery of the Hong Kong *Wu Zia Pian* of the '70s and '80s It would be intriguing to find when the more flamboyant style arrived and who introduced it.

These action movies were popular and made a welcome break among the purposeful screenings They emphasized that like the Hong Kong film to come, the Shanghai movies were a popular mass entertainment, not individual masterpieces but a stream of work in which regular viewers would quickly come to recognize appealing stars and rewarding cycles, and when the faults of this week's release could be corrected in the next In what was no more than a handful of their productions, six decades later, we could begin to sense the process repeating

The sound of silents

Most of these programmes were accompanied by uniformly excellent piano scores, but sound did occasionally issue from the Pordenone screen The Festival aired a 1908 clip of Caruso singing "Lucia di Lammermoor", the sound trailers for *The Jazz Singer* (Alan Crosland, 1927) and *High Treason* (Maurice Elvey 1929), and, most notably, Alexander Volkoff's 1929 *Die Weisse Teufel* (*The White Devil*), the synchronized (Russian choral interludes) transition between Tsarist superstar Ivan Mosjoukine's extraordinary silents and his disastrous career in sound films This is the Tolstoi story which Steve Reeves did again in the '60s

Master warrior Hadji Murat (Mosjoukine – who else?) outsmarts the Ruskies but falls out with his commander when the swine wants to execute prisoners Whisked off to composite Moscow (effects by cameraman Curt Courant), our hero is the only one in a white uniform and complies with the Tsar's order to remove his fur hat, saying that his people only do this in the presence of the devil Glamorous Lil Dagover, in a half veil, alerts him to the royal lechery menacing his old flame become ballet-dancer, Betty Amman (great in Joe May s *Asphalt* that year) and he is called upon to attack his own, which will mean the walling up of his young son (Rive) but outsmarts the Russians and is only brought down by volley fire What a guy!

Mosjoukine, with a shaven head, eyes burning under the brim of his headpiece, rivets attention without doing much at all The knowingly preposterous material delights, while leaving you disappointed that they didn't push it further to make it a great action adventure instead of a series of flamboyant moments and images Some scenes are the first European footage directed by Anatole Litvak

An event like this leaves you delighted by the range and ambition of the silent film, something a few say has not been matched since (I will be writing on the stunning Maurice Elvey retrospective in the next issue.) A month later, I'm still on a high from this deluge – more in a week than we've had in Australia since the National Film Theatre disappeared 20 years ago Why serious viewers have to travel across the world to see it, why the flow of important discoveries should be choked off here when so much of suspect ideological qualification has been tax funded, takes more explanation that it will ever get

fiction, fantasy and horror genres, but Alex has a tendency to want to deal with worlds that he creates so it kind of leads you there

The next thing we have on anything like the fast track is a remake of a 1968 film called *Quatermass and the Pit* [Roy Ward Baker]. A couple of years back Alex and I acquired the rights to the *Quatermass* series and, together with Hammer in co-production, we're in the process of having a script written. New Line is enthusiastic to get into production as soon as it can.

Hammer has been trying to get projects up and running and spent a little while over at Warner Bros., which didn't really come to any fruition. Hammer has a few projects with various studios now that are in fairly advanced stages. But I would think that *Quatermass* is jewel in the crown for Hammer. Dear old Nigel Kneale came up in the '50s with a truly wonderful blend of classic horror and science fiction themes that almost everybody has been ripping off ever since

Alex Proyas

Spirits of the Air, Gremlins of the Clouds (1989)

I had three characters and a shack in the middle of a desert and I had to make a movie out of that. In some ways, because it was so simple, it was so sparse, we were forced to be really clever with how we framed and shot it.

A three-hander is the most difficult thing you can ever do as a director. You have to be absolutely secure with the story, the characters and the actors. I was naïve to the extent that I didn't know that when I made it.

You would have to be a much cleverer director than I certainly was at the time to be able to achieve it. Nevertheless, I look back and think, "Wow, that is an interesting film", but certainly not a completely successful one. That's for sure.

The Crow (1994)

I had made many commercials and music videos, and was looking for a film to make in the States. I didn't want to hang around in Australia waiting for the AFC to tell me I could make a film. I felt I was a good filmmaker and thought I could make a big film that would be successful. So, I went over to the States and started meeting people.

The Crow started off as a comic book. I liked comic books as a kid and still do. I grew up on French ones, like *Heavy Metal*, rather than the American ones. I also used to draw comic books as a hobby — nothing professional.

While *The Crow* has a very simple narrative, it does have one and it does have characters. People responded to that.

They also responded to an energy that you don't see in films very often. That's not a purely visual thing. It's the result of the entire film. The look of a film comes out of the story. To say a film looks great is an immense insult because it dismisses every other aspect.

If you do make films with images that draw attention to themselves, that make people go "Ohhhh" — some people tend pick on you. I got so fucking sick of every review I read of *The Crow* saying, "It looks like *Blade Runner* [Ridley Scott, 1982]." It doesn't look anything like *Blade Runner*.

I know I shouldn't let it bother me, because usually the people who make those comments don't know what they're talking about. They want to classify anything that's science fiction or fantasy or horror into the one lump, the one area. They really don't understand that sort of genre.

Fuck them. I hate all those people. They're awful people. [*Laughs.*]

Slightly or wrongly, I made *The Crow* very specifically for what I saw as 'the audience'. Many Hollywood films try to reach too many people, everyone from 6 to 60. Trying to do that, you weaken something. It's like rock 'n' roll and the rap music that kids like but their parents generally hate.

If you want to make a film for one group of people, chances are you're going to alienate some people. That's probably a good thing, because then you can make the film strong and great for the people you should be making the film for.

Dark City (1998)

The strange ideas and weird concepts that I had floating around in my head jelled together over a long time. It started off as a very surrealistic, more of a dream than a narrative.

I did many rewrites with two other writers, Lem Dobbs and David Goyer. We had a great time doing it and they helped me really focus the work and make something that I think is a lot more coherent than it started off being. Lo and behold — we found ourselves with a science fiction movie. That's not really what was intended originally. It was more of a fantasy, but it's turned into a science fiction film and quite an interesting and good one at that, in terms of the screenplay at least.

Dark City is like a comic book film for adults. It's a little more sophisticated, it has a little bit more going for it, than the comic book stuff I did in *The Crow*, but it still has those 'hooks' that comic books have.

The really, really bad, bad guys, and the environment and the whole look of it, are comic book inspired.

The bad guys, the Strangers, are basically alien insect life forms that inhabit human cadavers. They live in human heads. They are a group mind and they animate bodies in order to be able to move around among us and not be obviously alien.

These bad guys have telekinetic abilities, but *Dark City* is not a heavily, viscerally violent film.

Cast

The main thing that worked to the advantage of the film was getting Rufus Sewall to play the lead. There was a lot of pressure at first to cast a 'big star'. I was always very keen on having someone who wasn't a big star in that rôle. I just felt it made it unique.

Rufus' character is a guy who wanders around without any memory. He doesn't know who he is, he's fighting for his life. I always feel that it's better to have someone in that sort of rôle that you don't know. He doesn't know who he is and we don't necessarily want to know who he is.

Having someone new and young and exciting, which I think Rufus is, is terrific for the film. It gives it a whole new energy. It was very brave of this particular studio to go for this.

We're supporting him — well, they're really not supporting rôles, they're very large rôles; it's almost a three-hander — with Kiefer Sutherland and William Hurt. We also have Richard O'Brien and Ian Richardson, who's a great actor.

I'm thrilled I've been able to induce such a wonderful bunch of people to be in this film. They all read the script and responded very quickly to it. It's a challenging script. It's not stupid. These guys must read a lot of really dumb scripts, but this one has something a little more challenging.

It has some twists and turns and some conceptual ideas that are quite challenging. The film might actually make someone think. You don't just sit there and watch it. You have to work a little bit, in a very positive sense.

It's a mystery on a grand scale. It's not just about one man, it's about a whole world. There are many questions that are answered eventually, but you have to take the ride and unearth the clues.

I think people are now ready for that. People are sick of the very simplistic stories that make them feel dumb, that talk down to them. So many Hollywood films do that. You see people playing these very elaborate CD ROM games that have many levels of narrative going on and all sorts of challenging aspects. So why do we give people really dumb movies to watch? Why can't we give them something that's a little more intricate and involved? Get them thinking?

I'm not talking about thinking in terms of deep, heavy thought, but just coming away with something that makes them look at the world a little bit differently.

I'm not trying to make intellectual films. I'm trying to give people something that is just one level above the stupid movies we're shown. I think you can do both. It's possible to straddle both worlds, to not just go for one or the other. There are really great films that have done that.

Blade Runner did that. It was an exciting film, amazing at the time. It has some emotion to it, some thought to it.

Effects

There's everything from the simplest in-camera trickery performed on the set to massive amounts of CGI. The Strangers manipulate peoples' lives and they have the ability to change the environment. They change the city these characters inhabit so that, at a certain time each night, everyone is put to sleep and they alter things. It's as if it's an elaborate rat maze and the humans are the rats running around in it. They make buildings grow and they create whole new neighbourhoods for the people to inhabit. They're conducting an elaborate game with their human subjects and environment. It takes complicated CGI effects to make the buildings grow and shift and change.

At one stage, there's a chase scene through this metamorphosing city that will be quite a nightmare to build in terms of special effects.

The underworld itself is designed by a guy called Patrick Tatopoulos, who is now a production designer and has been working as an illustrator for many years. *Independence Day* [Roland Emmerich, 1996] was the last thing he did. He designed everything to do with the Strangers and did a fantastic job. It's been a great set to shoot.

Silicon Graphics O2 platform is winning friends at the CGI market's lower end

Walking on Water

by Barrie Smith

CGI means big business for suppliers of dedicated hardware and software. And, because of it, video post houses may move deeper into feature production.

If you ever need to set up a sequence of the Statue of Liberty splashing across the Pacific Ocean to re-establish itself on Sydney Harbour, give Garner McLennan Design a ring. They've already done it — for a quirky Dr Pepper commercial — using Silicon Graphics processors with AliasWavefront software tools. Visual imagery of this nature is becoming highly accessible to the Australian filmmaker — at a cost, naturally. But at least the gear, the software and the designers are here to set up and execute these shots.

A company seeking to encourage a wider use of CGI in film and television production is Future Reality, based in Melbourne and Sydney. Future Reality sees a bright shiny dollar or two in supplying the high-end Silicon Graphics hardware and specialized software to support this enthusiasm, but the company is approaching the whole task with some unusual altruism and enlightenment.

Big white whale

Realizing that virtually all special effects are unique to each production and that, particularly in feature production, each project calls for specific talent and facilities, Future Reality has set up a rental section. Need a couple of Onyx multi-processors, a bagful of Discreet Logic or Alias|Wavefront software — and maybe some wise heads to drive the whole caboodle? Future Reality can probably help, as it did when Dale Duguid of Photon Stockman managed the CGI work on the *Moby Dick* location at Point Cook, Melbourne.

The 12-15 person team of CGI operators ran a 24-hour shift, driving a network of SGI workstations running DL Flint software. The Flint systems fed an Onyx running DL Logic Flame software. All the gear and software was hired from Future Reality.

A major switch in the way things will be done in the future in Sydney is the opening of Fox Studios, allowing post/CGI people to move in and service a one-off production with minimal capital outlay.

Encouragement

In terms of actually selling systems, Future Reality is a reseller of SGI platforms as well as Alias/Wavefront and Discreet Logic software. Future Reality has six people in each of its interstate offices, with the emphasis in terms of activity being Sydney, already there are seven Onyx sites in Sydney, and two in Melbourne.

Most film and television CGI and post work is now handled by clusters of companies in the Sydney suburbs of Artarmon and Crows Nest. Already Future Reality has installed systems in high-end design and post houses such as Garner McLennan Design, Digital Pictures, Videolab and Conja. And, mainly due to the capabilities of the hardware and software, companies who were formerly limited to performing television work can now work at higher resolution levels — and attack the feature film market.

Future Reality's NSW Sales Manager, Stephen Byrne, admits:

> They've already been dabbling in this sort of work in the past, but on much smaller platforms and a slower throughput. Now, the Onyx gives them the ability to put it through a lot more work.

Many companies in the field have found there's a worldwide shortage of people to drive these systems. It was the Keating Government's initiative which saw computers put into educational establishments two or three years ago. Aiding this was a move by Future Reality to install systems at no charge into some of the latter — as well as some commercial enterprises — to encourage staff training.

The problem really goes way back to when the first Paintbox was set up in television stations: people not only had to train on them and learn how to use them, but had to get aboard the high-end/high-cost gear, driven on a virtual 24 hours online revenue producing deployment schedule.

Stephen Byrne:

> People were coming in on weekends, at nights, anything: systems were free, almost voluntarily to learn the systems. So, the idea has been to place the [lower cost] O2 systems, which will still run the software — an ideal training platform. Future Reality has placed

several of those with post-production houses on the conditions that they're used for training purposes Systems installed in training organizations two or three years back are now producing trained and skilled juniors.

Two-minute run

Future Reality also plans to set up a larger training and demonstration area in its new Artarmon premises to conduct structured training classes for customers

Byrne explains that most of the people who work for Future Reality have come up through either production or the post-industry

We very much appreciate when somebody says "urgent" to us on the phone We know exactly what that means and so does our engineering team The fact that we're located in the heart of the industry means that it's a two minute walk down the road in some cases – or a two-minute run depending on the urgency of the situation!

Levels

As a platform, Silicon Graphics is the one which has been accepted by the film and television industry Future Reality's Demo Artist Rob O Neill explains

The entry level is the O2 single-processor system, which is used across the board for 3D animation systems, and the low-entry level compositing systems from Discreet Logic In the mid range, where people need to do more serious on line work there's the two processor Octane system As you get up into the higher-end editing and compositing systems, more applicable to film work is the Onyx systems. These start off at two to four processors

The biggest system that's installed in Sydney at the moment is a 12-processor Onyx system used by top design house Garner McLennan, driving Discreet Logic Flame software Garner's also use it for a lot of 3D rendering work

In NSW, Future Reality currently supports more than 85 SGI machines– O'Neill asserts that

the support people here have very strong backgrounds both in Unix, at a very technical end, but also in the television post production end, too So if it's a systems application problem, a specific hardware or software problem, or an operational problem, we cover all our bases

AAV DIGITAL PICTURES

Melbourne and Sydney are acknowledged as the country's twin hubs of film and television production An unusual adjunct to this is the operation of two post houses – running under the one banner – sited in each city and offering pretty much the same services talent and knowhow

AAV Digital Pictures, as it is known in Melbourne, is still housed in its long time quarters at Bank Street, South Melbourne ... while, for its part, Digital Pictures Crows Nest Sydney, base is right in the middle of 'digi city', in Chandos Street.

John Fleming, Melbourne MD, admits the company uses the branding "AAV Digital Pictures" more so in Melbourne, because of the 20 year history of the name Melbourne has, he explains, "a bias towards the programme side of things, although we still do quite a bit of commercial work".

Part of the mix is a "major part" of drama for both feature films and television services include daily film rushes transfers and post work on a number of television series

Notable was all the CGI work for a project called *Tidal Wave*, a Hallmark Movie of the Week early in 1997 The whole post package was handled in NTSC; Fleming points out the group can move easily between PAL and NTSC.

International series include *Moby Dick* and the *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* mini series Currently in progress is another series called *Thunderstone* for which the company is supplying CGI effects Added to this is the post work for local series such as *Good Guys, Bad Guys*, *Halifax fp* and *Ocean Girl*

Ostensibly, Melbourne handles the long form output while Sydney the shorter product. Fleming agrees this seems to be the case but admits he has

to be careful, because obviously Sydney does quite a lot of series work as well In terms of the visual effects, is has Inferno, Fire and a stronger CGI area when comparing the two businesses

Our [Melbourne] approach has actually been because of the fact that with the long form work we're dealing with finer margins, so we tend to look for more cost-effective solutions to meet the demands of those areas

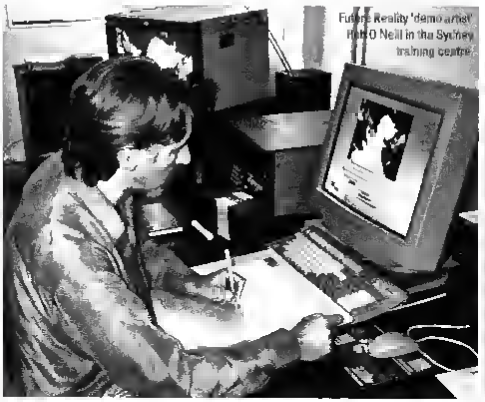
Geoff Clow, Head of Visual Effects at Digital Pictures In Sydney, agrees with this view that his group has a bias towards commercial productions But he counters "We do anything from features to television commercials and series work, with design and visual effects as a core part of our business."

In the latter area the company has scored a few goals in the UK, Europe, the USA, New Zealand and South-East Asia markets- one major project recently was the visual effects supervision- design and 3D graphics for a Reebok Doppelganger spot, commissioned by a London production company

Clow says his team enjoys working with "a whole plethora of toys that most top end places round the world have now". These, he adds are split into basic computer graphics, CGI and individual effects work using Flame, Inferno ... and "all the same toys used to make *Titanic*"

Feature work is ongoing as the company handles "anything from daily rushes transfers up to visual effects sequences and then into straight title design". Clow describes as "unusual for a post house" the company's activities in graphic corporate design and imaging This can entail "the design of a corporate logo that works in any medium, in print, in television".

And where does Digital Pictures sit in the market? Clow claims "We cover the top 10 percent of feature films, top 30 percent of commercials, and top 30 percent of programme work"



Future Reality 'demo artist' Hugh O Neill in the Sydney training centre.

Winning friends

As the 'big time' industry gears up for the big challenges, it is easy to forget that everyone has to start somewhere. In Future Reality's view, this is where the low cost O2 platform wins friends.

It may seem perverse to run high end software such as Discreet Logic Flint on a $10 000 machine but at least it gets an operator into the SGI arena. O'Neill claims that

> for a lot of the smaller houses, the SGI issue is not the big issue. It's more the software and a way of getting into the software. And now that Discreet Logic has ported Flint to the O2, it means that for half the price it was some time ago the smaller houses can get the same toolset that Flame and Inferno have, to a certain extent. They can create the same look that the big guys can.

Naturally, O Neill adds, O2 s low price has a penalty of a slower processing speed.

Realizing that this is a growth market, Future Reality offers some bundles – one being an SGI O2 computer and Alias/Wavefront software at less than $20,000.

Entry level Mac

Various computer platforms are grasping for the high ground in television and film post and graphics work. The Macintosh is still perceived as an entry-level system, mainly hobbled by slow processors and limited software. SGI is covering its territory both at the high end and down low, while Windows NT seems to be winning converts as it encroaches into the same area.

Future Reality s Stephen Byrne feels Windows NT 'is coming up from below in the same way as SGI is going down from above'. He admits: "There certainly is a meeting ground there."

Pricewise, the high level NT machines are probably coming up close to O2 but, in terms of the software that run on NT, are nowhere near it. Byrne

> If you take an NT machine at face value and an O2 at face value, you'll say the NT is the cheaper, but one of the things that Silicon Graphics has been expert at is graphics. The architecture within the SGI machines has things the NT machines just don't have. If you want to make an NT machine today as powerful as an SGI equivalent, you have to add a lot to it.

Byrne adds

> With SGI it's all in there. You buy an NT, you have to buy the NT and then all the bits to bring it up – and that's fine if it suits your application. I think most of the people today who are on NT workstations have come up from the low end of the industry and are trying to make it into the high end as their software develops.

Discreet Logic will soon supply and develop NT and Mac software tools. It is confirmed that SGI will be offering an NT platform in mid 1998. Byrne:

> They're not prepared to put anything out unless it works properly. Having held the high ground in graphics systems, they're not going to deliver an NT system that doesn't deliver SGI.

The big choice? Take on Windows NT and hope you can 'grow it' to suit your needs – or leap into the better known waters of SGI. The automotive analogy is whether you buy an up-specced Toyota or a dressed down Merc.

Offshore Action: NAB'98

by Barrie Smith

April 4-9 saw the National Association of Broadcasters hold its annual 'show and spruike' fest, now recognized as the world's largest electronic media trade event. Internationally, IBC and SMPTE have recognized the convergence of virtually all forms of electronic media, so NAB confirmed this trend by pronouncing its '98 theme as "Communications and Connectivity". BARRIE SMITH previewed the event.

The Las Vegas show houses 1,300 exhibitors and 150 sessions in 11 conferences, plus thousands of delegates. Everyone who is anyone in the television, audio, broadcasting, film and AV industries will attend.

For one, Steve Jobs (Apple founder) will be there – at least long enough to deliver the keynote address at the 5 April opening ceremony session. And in generous fashion, the nationally syndicated talk radio figure Rush Limbaugh will drop in, to be inducted into the NAB Hall of Fame. Can John Laws and Howard Sattler be far behind?

Australian industry identities make it a point each year to travel to NAB to keep abreast of developments. Some make buying decisions based on a forward look at technology – and a surprising number use the occasion to confer with suppliers who have travelled from Oz.

Making tracks

Stephen Smith, of audio post company Tracks, has found that savings made by investing in 'show specials' can sometimes outweigh "the straight hard costs of travel and accommodation and time away from home". In his view, NAB is great for forward planning and believes it has become *the* launching pad for much new technology.

In general, Smith finds there are two things he looks for. One is new developments in technology: he finds you can "see all the latest releases", adding "It helps you see how new products are going, where they are going." The other plus is the "many facilities and suppliers who go across from Australia. And you can actually do a lot of catching up and sorting out business over there that you can't do here."

Smith explains he can "do a lot of intra-Australian business over there". He claims he can

> get together with the Fairlight people, the local rep and the guys from the States. We get a good feedback of what's happening with the system over there and where it's heading. We also get to meet other engineers and operators using the gear. Everyone's focused on business, work and the equipment side of things.

This year, Smith will make

> a check first on the systems that we're using in the way of our work stations, the Fairlights and Avid AudioVision systems, to see where they're going. I look at the competition to see what they're doing to make sure that my systems and our suppliers aren't falling behind in what we can offer people.

As Tracks is involved in film and television audio, Smith finds he needs to know what's happening, not only in the sound side, but video and film developments, especially video editing systems. "Where they're heading — what's hot and what's not. Whether companies like Avid are still holding their position in the market."

Atlab and Dfilm

Alan Robson, of Atlab and associated company Dfilm, sets out to visit the suppliers and products most appropriate to his interests but adds: "a general look around is always worthwhile. You can pick up on things that you might not be aware of."

The NAB exhibition itself, Robson finds, is "very hectic and, of course, there's always some papers that are well worthwhile attending as well".

Between the papers, meeting the suppliers and "getting up to scratch with them" always takes a bit of time, Robson adds. But the upside is that companies get the opportunity "to show you things that they can't show you on site here in Australia".

This year continues the group's strong interest in laser recorders and data transfer systems. Added to this, Robson checks out any "software or hardware that's applicable to either the digital side of the business and the laboratory – and the evolution it is going through in terms of digital post as well".

Travelling with him will be Peter Doyle from Dfilm, as well as Larry and Peter Flynn from Acme Digital (part owners of Dfilm). The sheer effort of

roving NAB, Robson admits, is eased somewhat, "because if we have more people there, we don t ne essarily wandet around arm in arm doing the same thing. We split our time."

This year, he experts to see more convergence type products and devices offering higher storage, higher speeds and more operational altetna tives

HM3D's time cycle

It was expected that Paul Western Pittard, HM3D Product Manager handling graphics products would be making the Las Vegas trek.

On the srhedule are meetings with suppliers – outs de the exhibition hours. Western Pittard will most likely spend between a half to a full day looking at other stands then spend the rest of the time on the suppliers' stands, meeting with people and looking at new produrts HM3D represents

On his 1997 NAB trip, company MD Hatry Magarios took the opportunity to visit Digital Domain while that com pany was digitally dealing with *Titanic* Magarios takes the opportunity "while we're in the States to visit people like that –and to visit the LA offices of some of out suppliers over there".

Magarios sees NAB as valuable from the clients point of view, "because they get to see technology 6-12 months before it's released It helps them in their purchasing cycle '

One of the big things for HM3D this year is the appearance of a new ver sion of Illusion, now fully integrated online and totally compatible with the Avid editing products.

The NAB sally may suit face to face encounters, but on returning, Magar ios still finds the tyranny of the time difference to sew up deals a bother "Dealing with Toronto and LA you've just got to get up early in the morning or late at night to talk to them from this end "

However, he counters this with the derlaration that a lot of the finalizing "can be done from here", adding "the international travel side of things isn't that crucial any more. Most of my negotiations are done via email these days "

Perhaps In 2000 – a virtual NAB?

The Future Reality is now

David Edgar of Future Reality plans to be one of four travelling to NAB

We treat NAB rather seriously I'm going myself plus the respective managers from our Auckland and Sydney offices, and the manager of our rental division [which had its genesis on *Moby Dick*]

Believe it or not, it actually gets easier every year You take great slabs of it and just eliminate the unwanted The show is relatively well organized in terms of grouping together similar exhibits I've never been in the radio hall in my life, never been near transmitters, microwave links or OB vans

Edgar reveals that, now the Multimedia/rompute: people have been centralized In the Sands Hotel exhibi tion centre, he spends 90 percent of his time there and 10 percent In the main hall

This year-NAB Is split into two the main Las Vegas Exhibition Centre (In the Hilton), "where the traditional tele vision people hang out", and a smaller ronvention farility within The Sands Hotel. The Las Vegas Convention Cen tre is part of the Las Vegas Hilton

Edgar admits he is always on the lookout We go to these shows really for several rea sons Firstly, all our manufacturers have sales meetings, new product launches, etc., during the show. So typically it may be the only face-to-face contact with a lot of our overseas suppliers.

Secondly, we go there because our clients go there, and we like to try and assist them in getting private demos in the various suites We see all these people [Australian clients] all the time – but it's rare to have them all in the same place in what basically is neutral ground

The third reason the FR group travels to Las Vegas Is to see emerging tech nology or new products new arressones or items that may dovetail with the company's activities Edgar

We're pretty happy with our core product representation but it's always good to look at – to use an expression in the computer industry – what the wackos in the ware-houses are doing

Futute Reality Edgar claims, is "very computer focused", and he adds that over the years

the big change I've seen is the deliv-ery to market When I first went to NAB, you could reliably look at products that would be deliverable and released in PAL 12-18 months down the track. Now you are look ing at software products that are in the field 3-6 months later

Man is not a camel, so Edgar has pri mal reasons for liking Las Vegas as a venue

The great thing about a gambling town is food is cheap, accommoda-tion is cheap, taxis are cheap and they're readily available It's actually a pretty cheap place to hang out and the cost per head of getting there, versus say to Europe, is prob-ably half So we tend to focus a larger group of people on NAB because the per head cost for us is lower

Believe it or not, it actually gets easier every year. You take great slabs of it and just eliminate the unwanted.

Whilst not particulatly liking the gam bling town, Edgar admits that "Compared to other convention towns, It does serve its purpose very well "

Techtel

Peter Chamberlain, Techtel Marketing Director, says his rompany intends to "make sure that all of out suppliers get some exposure to out Australian customers", adding it Is essential to "find out who are the customers that are going beforehand, and try and Introduce them to the new products the suppliers have".

Chamberlain will be accompanied by MD Ray Holland, Chris Patten, Techtel's "transmission expert", and Sales Executive Chris Farqhuarson The team expect to use the visit "as an opportunity to see what the competition is doing, see what the other local distributors and major manufar tuters have roming".

A big th ng for the company is the release of Softimage on NT Chamberlain explains It was first released at IBC, adding, "It's going to be a big launch at NAB because the Ameticans have not seen It yet " Terhtel expected to exhibit it at Digital Media World In March

And what's new at NAB?

Chamberlain

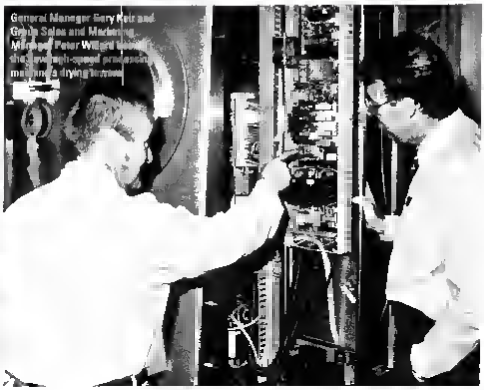
I know there's going to be some new stuff from Accom – their specialty is disc drives Accom has really got some neat products, one of which it introduced at IBC, principally designed for disc storage of video and audio, and particularly for editing

A key feature for this product is that you can do non-destructive pre-reads of your video, unlike a normal tape machine where you do pre-read editing and write over the old material when you do it. With a disc system, you can do a pre-read and write to different sections of the disc, so you can do it over and over again.

Techtel handles approximately 35 sup pliers in Australia and, Chamberlain explains

One of the key things that the suppliers are looking for is someone who is well known in the local market and has been around for a very long time. Our specialty is the use of PCs with television. We're not only understanding of television and all of the technical ramifications of that, but also we understand PCs Anyone who supplies products that marry those two things together really looks upon us as the local expert

The NAB Web site Is at www nab org/conventions/.



General Manager Gary Kerr and Group Sales and Marketing Manager Peter Willard beside the new high-speed processor, making a flying [illegible]

Atlab Group Expansion

by Scott Murray

The Atlab Group has almost completed significant expansion of its Sydney and Melbourne operations in response to growing domestic and international demand for its numerous services and facilities.

The Group, wholly owned by the Top 100-listed company Amalgamated Holdings Limited, opened new facilities in the two major capitals in February and March.

Alan Robson, Group General Manager, says the expansion is a crucial step to ensure Atlab, which comprises five divisions – Atlab Australia (Sydney), Atlab New Zealand (Auckland), Atlab Queensland, Cinevex Laboratories (Melbourne) and Dfilm Services – can meet the demands of its clients going into the 21st Century.

The new projects involve:

- Moving the bulk release printing of features and trailers out of Atlab's Hotham Parade facility in Artarmon to the neighbouring North Shore suburb of Lane Cove. Robson says, "This will be a major benefit for our clients as we are enabling the Hotham Parade facility to exclusively focus on, and further enhance, the processing and post production services already available to Australian and international producers of feature films, television drama, commercials, documentaries and short films."
- The refurbishing and expanding of Cinevex Laboratories in the inner Melbourne suburb of Elsternwick. "It will seems like a brand new facility", says Robson. Cinevex already offers negative and positive processing, and a full range of post-productions services. In addition, the Elsternwick laboratory will soon offer a digital film service, a first for Melbourne.
- The splitting of the Sydney based Dfilm operation into two distinct business units. Atlab dfb (standing for "digital film bureau") supplying the industry with a full digital bureau service including kines (video to film transfers), whilst Dfilm will concentrate on digital effects. Atlab dfb will handle all in/out services and be linked into the laboratory services side of the Sydney and Melbourne operations. Dfilm will concentrate on the creative and technical requirements of producing international standards of quality for 2D and 3D film resolution effects for features and commercials.
- The installation at the Hotham Parade facility in Sydney of a new Harrison Series 12 fully automated sound mixing console to replace the existing Quad 8 Coronado. The decision on which console would best suit the needs of Australian filmmakers required significant research and investigation into current and future international post-production procedures. Robson says, "Consultation with key local freelance mixing personnel was also part of the overall decision making process – a process which will continue during the design stages of the new console."

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Ahoy the Mona.

Digital Media World '98

by Tim Hunter

Digital Media World '98 ran from 18-20 March at the Sydney Exhibition Centre in Darling Harbour, and showcased the new hardware and software that makes the film and television industry tick. It was also a chance for locals to preen and measure themselves against what's happening internationally.

When James Cameron sank the *Titanic* in his film of the same name, the more obvious signs of digital manipulation were there for all to see. At this year's Australian Effects and Animation festival, which ran as part of Digital Media World '98, the opportunity to see "how things happen" was more entrancing than ever. Senator Richard Alston, who opened the Festival, welcomed "the fact the festival gives Australian filmmakers the chance to share ideas and expertise with some of the foremost practitioners of digital magic in Australia and overseas."

But where does Digital Media World fit in with the local market?

Well, you just have to look at the industry heavyweights involved and the new product presentation to realize that this is more than a picture show for computer nerds.

Add to this the TV & Film Australia Asia Pacific Production Show and Conference, and the overall events are of broad industry involvement.

Jeff Oliver of Garner Maclennan Design believes Australia is the Hollywood of the Asia Pacific Region. The Exhibition and Conference can only help in promoting Australia as a centre of excellence within these industries."

Alias|Wavefront's launch of Maya, Animotion Design's first time presentation of ICE Effects, and the first full demonstration of Kinetik 3D Studios Max 2 all made the trip even more worthwhile.

With the increasing pressure all over the world for exhibitions of this type to be the best and present the very latest, this event provides a worthwhile showcase by bringing all the converging technologies of digital media, interactive multimedia and film and television production together.


Jurassic Park: The Lost World.


Men in Black.

designers for television

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Funding Decisions

Feature Films

Documentaries

Features in Planning

Production Survey

Features in Pre-Production

Features in Production

Features in Post-Production

Short Films

inproduction

KEANU COMES TO TOWN • MATT DAY TRANSPLANTS ORGANS • JIMEOIN HAS A LAUGH

FFC Funding Decisions

Following a Board meeting held in February 1998 the FFC has entered into contract negotiations with the producers of the following projects.

Feature Films

TWO HANDS

Brindfeld 3

D Gregor Jordan
P Martan Manderwan
W Gregor Jordan
Dist REP Beyond Film

Two Hands follows the misadventures of Jimmy an aspiring young ex stretcher, who loses gangster de lias and has to pull his first "job" to avoid the bullet. Unfortunately for Jimmy he is distracted by the girl of his dreams who offers him the prospect of a better life. The job goes wrong, and a couple of street kids who acted as the catalyst for his downfall become entangled in the events that lead to Jimmy's transformation.

LOOKING FOR ALIBRANDI

Tapestram Mfall Films

D Kate Woods
P Robyn Kershaw
EP Tristram Mfall
W Melina Marchetta
Dist Beyond Films

Looking for Alibrandi takes us into the world of Josie a 17-year-old Italian girl during her final years of a private Catholic girl's school. Josie and her mother Christine live together in relative harmony but both struggle in their relationship with Nonna Katia the matriarch keeper of the family traditions. Josie longs to break away from the boundaries imposed by Italian tradition, she become part of the privileged world of middle-class Australia sponsored by her friend John Barton. He is everything she wants to be, and He would be perfect if she could just be on his arm. When John commits suicide, Josie is devastated. If this isn't enough to cope with on the roller coaster of adolescent life there are several more explosions in store before Josie reaches adulthood.

Documentaries

ATLANTA'S CHILD

(43 MIN ACCORD)

Wild Visuals

D Gary Steer
Ps Gary Steer, Tina Dalton
W Tony Davis

Atlanta's Child chronicles the life of 16 year-old Jane Piper. Her father Lance stopper of the world's schooners "Atlanta"... and retired G.I., surrogate uncle to Jane and first mate on the boat, have shot video footage of Jane since she was seven. Instead of going to school, Jane went to see and the world became her classroom. The film will serve as a long voyage round the islands of Marquesas, Tahiti, Tubua and Tuamotu and will be interspersed with images and tales from Jane and Lance's record of the circumnavigation of the planet in 1993.

DIVORCE

(56 MIN ACCORD)

Living Pictures

D David Flatman
Ps David Flatman, Sue Flatman
W David Flatman
Presale ABC

The introduction of the Family Law Act in 1975 was revolutionary in its de stigmatising of divorce, making it much easier for couples to end a marriage. The result today is around 50 000 divorces a year in Australia — three times the pre 1975 rate. But while it's apparently simple, it's often not clearer. The courts have become battlegrounds for bitter and often tragic child custody disputes. To address this, collaborative parenting plans offer an alternative to the trauma of custody battles. In some cases, the new concepts are allowing estranged partners to find common ground for the first time in years, and children are staying in touch with both parents and grandparents.

INSIDE THE BEAST OF AUSTRALIAN BASEBALL

(55 MIN ACCORD)

James Stevens

D James Stevens
P James Stevens
W James Stevens
Presale ABC

This is a Gold Coast story about the Japanese Meruyama and Austral an Dorrington families who love baseball so much that they have purchased their own team, a struggling professional National League Club. Their goal is to save the club from extinction and eventually participate in an Asian Super League. This film will follow an Australian baseball season; the structures, the flaws, the hopes and the fears. Driven by strong characters it goes behind the scenes and reveals the sweat and money it takes to pursue the dream.

LIFELOVE

(2 X 45 MIN NON ACCORD)

Beyond Productions

D Angie Christofis
EP Stephen Amezeroz
P Angie Christofis
W Angie Christofis
Presale Channel 7
Dist Beyond Distribution

Lifelove is a documentary series about Australians who share a love for wild, unmanaged places. Each episode tells a story about a person's all consuming passion for the wilderness. Their 'lifelove' whether it be rock-climbing, mountain biking, kayaking or cross country skiing. The film will follow six people pushing themselves to their limits. Rewards for their efforts are often no more than personal. Yet their achievements are extraordinary.

THE RIDGE

(56 MIN ACCORD)

Angela Borelli

D Janet McLeod
P Angela Borelli
W Janet McLeod
Presale ABC

Lightning Ridge is the largest Australian opal field and home of the black opal, the rarest gem in the world. Although stones will overnight millionaires around all those who come to the Ridge, few strike it rich. Often the losers choose to stay on the lifestyle more important than the pursuit of opal. In reality, people only expect to survive on the Ridge and dream about the million dollar gemstone.

CTPF Decisions

The Commercial Television Production Fund has announced four new projects.

THE DAY OF THE ROSES

(4 HOUR MINI SERIES)

Liberty and Beyond Productions

D Peter Fisk
Ps Tony Kavanagh, Simone North
W John Misto
Presale Network Ten

The Day of the Roses is based on extensive research with both the survivors and rescuers of the Granville train disaster of 1977.

THE WAY OF THE BIRDS

(30 MIN ANIMATION)

Fiona Eagger

D Sarah Watt
P Fiona Eagger
W Sonia Borg
Presale Channel 7

Based on the book by Meme McDonald about a young girl who her kinship with a migratory bird

DDD SOX

(PILOT EPISODE)

Imagehead

D Hans Pfeiffer
Ps Daryl Sparkes, Lachlan Marsden, Shane Krause
W John Palmer
Presale Channel 7

The pilot episode of a proposed puppet-based series for a pre school audience about a group of mismatched socks.

G S TV

(PILOT EPISODE)

Mother's Art

D Tim Emery
Wr Gary McCaffrey, Shaun McCallef
Presale Channel 7

This pilot episode for an adult comedy series featuring puppets. It is set in an intergalactic space station that broadcasts television throughout the universe.

Features in Planning

HOLY SMOKE

Producer company Jane Chapman Productions
Director Jane Campion
Producer Jane Chapman
Screenwriter Anna Campion
Cast Kate Winslet

Production Survey

Features in Pre-Production

DEMONS IN MY HEAD

Production company Empire Motion Pictures
Budget $500,000

Principal Credits

Director Neil Johnson
Producers Jane Rowland, Neil Johnson
Line producer Jane Rowland
Executive producer George Brook
Screenwriter Neil Johnson
Director of photography Grant Hall
Production designers James Dyson, Jason Jubb
Costume designer Aurelie McAlpine
Editor Neil Johnson
Sound designer Neil Johnson

Planning and Development

Casting Jane Rowland, Neil Johnson

KEY

EP Executive Producer
P Producer
Co-P Co Producer
AS Associate Producer
LP Line Producer
D Director
SW Screenwriter
C Cast
PC Principal Cast
SE Story Editor
WD Writer director
DIST Distributor

NOTE. Production Survey forms now adhere to a revised format.

Cinema Papers regrets it cannot accept information received in a different format.

Cinema Papers does not accept responsibility for the accuracy of any information supplied by production companies. This is particularly the case when information changes but the production company makes no attempt to correct what has already been supplied.

inproduction

ProductionSurvey

continued

Dialogue coach: Nikki Price
Shooting schedule by: Neil Johnson
Budgeted by: Neil Johnson

Production Crew

Insurer: Royal & Sun Alliance

Camera Crew

Camera operator: Grant Hall
Focus puller: Duncan Barrett
Clapper loader: Duncan Barrett
Camera assistant: Duncan Barrett
Camera type: Digital Betacam

On-set Crew

1st assistant director: Velvet Elgued
Script assistant: Nikki Price
Continuity: Lisa Bechemy
Make up: Stage FX – Lisa Jacob
Make up assistants: Lisa McMahon, Jacinta Miller
Special fx make-up: Stage FX – Lisa Jacob
Hairdresser: Stage FX – Lisa Jacob

Art Department

Propspeople: James Dobbin, Jason Jobe

Wardrobe

Wardrobe supervisor: Adrienne McAlpine

Post-production

Post-production supervisor: Neil Johnson

Cast

Matthew Marcotte (Travis Brown), Geeti Bowman Miller (Bessie), Aimee Allum (Lacessa), Jane Rowland (Macia), James Dobbin (Bill), David Vallon (Widget Man in the Universe)

A motorcycle crashes into the back garden of Travis Brown. Upon opening it, he discovers a headset that allows the wearer to bring strange objects across from another dimension.

FRESH AIR

Production company: RB Films
Production office: Sydney
Production: May/June 1998

Principal Credits

Director: Neil Mansfield
Producer: Rosemary Blight
Associate producer: Kylie du Fresne
Scriptwriter: Neil Mansfield
Production designer: Gavin Bartley
Editor: Dany Cooper
Underwriter: FACB

Post production

Length: 92 mins
Gauge: Super 16mm

Marketing and Finance

Network pre-sale: SBS Channel 4 (UK)
Showtime
Distribution guarantor: Beyond Films
Finance: Australian Film Commission, SBS, Showtime

Seven typically funny/sad days in the lives of three aspiring art students – a filmmaker, a painter and a musician – who are almost 30 and live, work and rock under the flightpath in the multicultural inner-western suburbs of Sydney.

PASSION

Production company: Matt Carroll Films
Distribution company: Beyond Films

Principal Credits

Director: Peter Duncan
Producer: Matt Carroll
Scriptwriters: Peter Goldsworthy, Rod George
Based on the stageplay: Peace and Rage by Rod George

Government Agency Investment

Development: FFC

Marketing

International sales agent: Beyond Films
International distribution: Hollywood Partners, Beyond Films, REP

Cast

Richard Roxburgh (Percy Grainger)

Passion is the story of acclaimed pianist, composer and eccentric Percy Grainger, and the intense relationship with his mother Rosa which dominated his life. The film charts Percy's rise from child prodigy to the toast of Edwardian London revered and celebrated throughout the world.

SAMPLE PEOPLE

Production company: Lyons Motion Pictures
Budget: $2M
Production: May 1998

Principal Credits

Director: Clinton Smith
Producers: Emile Sherman, Barton Smith
Executive producer: Jonathan Steinman
Scriptwriters: Clinton Smith, Peter Buckmaster
Script editor: Jace Felstein
Director of photography: Kim Batterham
Production designer: Steven Jones-Evans
Editor: Dany Cooper
Runner: Pevate

A drama thriller set in Sydney's multiracial youth culture.

Features In Production

CAT'S TALES

Production company: Screencraft Productions

Principal Credits

Director: Ralph Lawrence Marsden
Producer: Ralph Lawrence Marsden
Associate producer: Loretta Fitzgerald
Scriptwriter: Ralph Lawrence Marsden
Directors of photography: David Fraser, Mark Freeman
Editors: Glen Short, Serena Harris
Sound recordists: Barry Donald, Doug Shaw

Post production

Shooting stock: Fuji color
Film gauge: 16mm

Cast

Pamela, Robert and Samuel the cats (as themselves), Shelley Schumann (Mrs Ellis), Joyce Drake (Mavis), Walter Ryan (Mr Reeve), Marie Dee (Mrs Reeve), Adam Mat (Martin), Ari Syndeniotis (Steve), Maria Mastorakoulis (Melina), Tonia Yianni (Mrs Nasios mother), Con Karanotis (Cafe manager)

A venture stories about cats.

DEAD DOLPHINS

Production company: Vertigo Pictures
Production office: Adelaide
Production: 30 March – 24 April

Principal Credits

Producer: Rolf de Heer
Director: Rolf de Heer
Writer: Rolf de Heer
Production manager: Julie Ryan
Camera operator: Mark Sexton
Production designer: Ian Jobson
Art director: Phil MacPherson
Editor: Tim Neshaw
Music: Graham Tardif

Cast

Peter Monagham, Jamie Nicola

"Life is like a beanstalk...isn't it?"

DEAR CLAUDIA

Production company: J. McElroy Holdings
Budget: $3.53 million
Production: March 1998

Locations: Brampton Island, Ravenswood, Gold Coast, Queensland

Principal Credits

Director: Chris Lee
Producers: Des Power, J.M. McElroy
Scriptwriter: Chris Cudlipp

Cast

Bryan Brown, Aleksandra Vujcic

A romantic comedy about a couple marooned on an island.

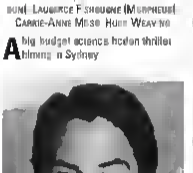
THE MATRIX

Production company: Warner Bros
Director: Andy and Larry Wachowski
Producers: Andrew Mason, Co-producer: Barrie M. Osborne, Joel Silver
Special effects: D. Film

Cast

Keanu Reeves (Thomas "Neo" Anderson), Laurence Fishburne (Morpheus), Carrie-Anne Moss, Hugo Weaving

A big budget science fiction thriller filming in Sydney.



THE MISSING

Production company: Ugly Duckling Films
Production office: Melbourne
Production: 22 April – 17 June

Principal Credits

Director: Marcela Alberti
Producers: Linda House, Jim Stark
Co-producer: Yvonne Collins
Scriptwriter: Marcela Alberti
Director of photography: Geoffrey Hall
Production designer: Chris Kennedy
Editor: Ken Sallows
Script editor: Duncan Thompson
Art director: Alison Rye

Post-production

Film gauge: 35mm
Length: 100 mins

Government Agency Investment

Development: FFC
Overseas financing: Hollywood Partners

Monaghan Tasmanian returns from Rome to Australia to help his old friend Sonia find her kidnapped daughter. He teams up with a man named Willie, but as they travel through the outback they become the hunted in a dangerous pursuit across the hostile terrain.

MUGGERS

Production company: Reinman Entertainments
Distribution: Winchester Films
Portugal
Budget: $4M
Production: March 1998

Principal Credits

Director: Dean Murphy
Producers: Nigel Odell, Darin Reinman
Executive producer: John Wolstenholme, Gary Smith, Chris Craig
Scriptwriter: Robert Taylor

Cast

Matt Day, Jason Barry

Two medical students become involved in an illicit organ transplant scam.

PAPERBACK HERO

Production company: Paperback Films Pty Ltd
Distribution company: Beyond Films & Polygram Filmed Entertainment
Pre-production: 5/1/98
Production: 20/2/98
Post production: 6/4/98

Principal Credits

Director: Anthony Bowman
Producers: Lance Reynolds & John Winter
Co-producer: Dan Rogers
Scriptwriter: Anthony Bowman
Director of photography: David Burr
Production designer: Jon Dowling
Costume designer: Louise Wakefield
Editor: Vivian La Jenet
Sound designer: Alex Loc
Sound recordist: Greg Burgmann

Planning and Development

Casting: Faith Martin & Associates
Extras casting: Lyn Aldo & Russi
Budgeted by: John Winter

Production Crew

Production manager: Rosslyn Arrenneth
Production co-ordinator: Scott E.
Production secretary: Louisa Kong
Location manager: Chris Stewart
Unit manager: Dave Sutton
Production runner: Anji Beyers
Production accountant: Naveen Kingsmott
Completion guarantor: FACB
Legal services: Tobias Cooper & Marcus
Travel co-ordinator: Showtravel

Camera Crew

Focus puller: John Wareham
Key grip: Lester Bindi
Gaffer: Graham Rutherford

On set Crew

1st assistant director: Charles Rutherham
3rd assistant director: Marc Ashton
Continuity: Jenny Dudley
Room runner: Gary Dixon
Make-up: Margaret Stevenson
Make-up assistant: Maree McDonald
Stunts co-ordinator: Danny Bagwin
Unit nurse: Connie Webber Rudd
Catering: Events Catering

Art Department

Art director: Adam Head
Art department co-ordinator: Katie Nutt
Art department runner: Dean McGowen
Art department assistant: Christine Feli
Draftsman: Andrew Hays
Props buyers: Paul Hunnell & Michelle Sotheren
Standby props: Harry Zettle
Action vehicle co-ordinator: Mario "Harry" Wargo

Wardrobe

Wardrobe supervisor: Graham Fuscell
Standby wardrobe: Helen Marks

Construction Department

Construction manager: Andrew Gardiner
Set builder: Bob Daley

Post-production

Mixed at: Spectrum Films
Laboratory: Atlas

Government Agency Investment

Production: FFC & Pacific Film and Television Commission (PFTC)

Marketing

International sales agent: Beyond Films Ltd

Cast

Claudia Karvan (Ruby), Hugh Jackman (Jack), Jeanie Drynan (Suzie), Bruce Venables (Art), Fitch Sinder (Ralph), Charlie Little (Eddie), Annie Milliken, Andrew S. Gilbert

Jack, an outback road-train trucker moonlights as a romance novelist. When the book becomes a best-seller, he must do some fast-talking to convince his long-time friend Ruby to pretend to be the writer.

SECOND DRILL

Production company: Verity Pictures Pty Ltd
Production: April 1998

Principal Credits

Director: Charles "Bud" Trowell
Producer: Cameron James Miller
Co-producer: Peta Crawford
Executive producers: Oscar Schiral, James Pondaris
Scriptwriter: Anthony Langona

Production Crew

Production manager: Rob Buch

The disturbing and violent portrayal of Sunny Cinnamon, 55, and terminally ill with weeks left to live, who pays two estranged army recruits to kidnap his only son's gay lover in an attempt to lure her son Evan into a cat and mouse game fuelled by a hidden agenda of suicide and self-retribution. It is the cruel story of a military man so guilt-ridden that he forces his only son into killing him. A sin-ridden drama that demonstrates the raw facts of a life spattered by a code. A lesson in expectancy. A drill we will all have to encounter.

SOMEWHERE IN THE DARKNESS

Budget: $800,000

Principal Credits

Director: Paul Fenech
Producers: David Webster, Berndan Fletcher, Paul Fenech
Scriptwriters: Berndan Fletcher, Paul Fenech
Directors of photography: Mike Kluna, Grant Jordan
Production designer: Madelaine Hetherton
Editor: Ade to Miles

On-set Crew

1st assistant director: Berndan Fletcher

Post production

Film gauge: Super 16

Cast

Barry Jenkins, Rowan Witt, Austen Taylor, Robyn Loau, Leah Purcell, Ennis Dunn

The story of a young boy and an old man trapped beneath rubble in a collapsed building. The old man distracts the boy from the hopeless situation by taking him on a journey of the mind.

Features in Post-Production

BABE IN METROPOLIS

Production company: Kennedy Miller
Distribution company: Universal Pictures
Production: September 1997 ...

Principal Credits

Director: George Miller
Producers: George Miller, Doug Mitchell, Bill Miller
Line producer: Barbara Gibbs
Scriptwriters: George Miller, Judy Morris, Mark Lamprell
Director of photography: Andrew Lesnie
Production designer: Roger Ford
Costume designer: Noema Moriceau
Editor: Jay Friedkin, Margaret Sixel
Composer: Nigel Westlake

Planning and Development

Storyboard artist: Peter Fund

Production Crew

Visual effects: The Neal Scanlan Studio

Art Department

Art director: Colin Gibson

inproduction

Production Survey

continued

ANIMALS

Animal trainers KARL LEWIS MILLER, STEVE MARTIN

CAST

JAMES CROMWELL (FARMER HOGGETT), MARTA SZUSANSKI (MRS HOGGETT), MURKEY RODNEY

Having triumphed at the National Sheepdog Trial, Babe returns home a hero – but in his enthusiasm to be at the side of his beloved "boss" the little pig accidentally hitches a mushy wheels Farmer Hoggett in traction and finds tied. With the bank threatening foreclosure, Mrs Hoggett's only hope for saving the farm is to enter an offer for Babe to demonstrate his sheep herding abilities at a nearby State Fair in exchange for a generous fee. Thus, Babe and Mrs Hoggett set off on a journey that takes them to a fantasy storybook metropolis where Babe encounters an innumerable assortment of animal friends, experiences the joy and sorrow of life and learns he is kind and steady heart can mend a sorry world.

THE BEGGARS' OPERA CAFE

Budget $45 000
Production 3/9 11/16/97

PRINCIPAL CREDITS

DIRECTOR VIKKY FISHER
Producers VIKKY FISHER, KELLY FISHER
Screenwriter VIKKY FISHER
Director of photography KAT NA BOWELL
Creative consultant ELLERY RYAN
Production designer KIRST INKSTER
Editor CINDY CLARKSON
Sound recordist NEIL DAWKEN

PRODUCTION CREW

Production manager ANGUS BLACK
Production co-ordinators ELLEN ABBOUS & DONNA CAMERON
Production assistants REUBEN PRETT, BRIAN LEWIS

CAMERA CREW

Focus puller GRANT SWEETNAM
Clapper loader MARK N SMITH
Grips MATT YATES & MATT BLACKWOOD
Gaffer CHRIS LONERGAN

ART DEPARTMENT

1st assistant director CAROLINE WATERS
2nd assistant director JOHN ADAM
2nd unit DOP DARRIN MARTIN
Continuity MEGAN ELLIOT
Scene painter ROB DAWSON
Hair & make-up KATHLEEN FUNNISS
Catering HEATHER'S HEALTHY MUNCHIES & HEALTH FOOD THYME
Runner ALAN JOHNSTON

ART DEPARTMENT

Art director PAUL BEASLEY
Art department assistant JOE E MCNAIR

CAST

HELLY FISHER (VICKY), CAITLIN MCDOUGALL (LOUISE), ROBYNNA MACAULAY (JUST NZ), RIP MUSHUN (TOM), TORSTEN NILSON (MARSHALL), ROBERT TAYLOR (SIMON), COLLETTE MANN (MARY), REX SYMONS (RICHARD), JOHN FLAUH (STRIKMAN), GHONTE KAPUNIAKS (REXTAU PATEUR)

A hen a 30th birthday party Louise Berkey and Jasmine open an underground cafe in their berkyard garage which becomes the most popular place in town. Even the policeman and the nosy next door neighbour become regulars. The money starts flowing, finally freeing them to follow their dreams. But when push comes to shove will they keep sight of their original goals?

THE CRAIC

Production company FORTHE GRAHUI
Distribution company VILLAGE ROADSHOW Ltd
Budget $1 2M
Production 27 JANUARY – MARCH 1998
Locations MELBOURNE, WENTWORTH, BRIDGEN HILL, SYDNEY, GOLD COAST

PRINCIPAL CREDITS

Director TIM EMERY
Producers MARK GRAHUI, DAVID FORTHE
Line producer STEVE LUBY
Executive producers BRUNO CHARLESWORTH, ALAN FINNEY
Screenwriter JIMMOLL
Director of photography JOHN WHEELER
Production designer PENNY SOUTHGATE
Costume designer MICHAEL CORNELIM
Editor MICHAEL COLLINS

PRODUCTION CREW

Production manager JOHN CRAWFORD FILM CART
Casting (Feature) ALAN MCKEE (WESLEY), ROBERT MORGAN (CELIA), COLIN HAY (FARRIT), JAMIE HALL (ALIN), CATHERINE ARENA (EKCA), NICHOLAS BILL, GREG EVANS, KATE GORMAN, GEOFF PAINE, ANITA CERRI, ANNE PHILLAN

Two Irish lads find themselves caught up in a bungled IRA mission. Fearing for their lives they flee to Australia and end up being chased across the country by the Immigration Department, the SAS and an Irish "super grass"

DEAD END

Production company R & B FILM PRODUCTIONS
Production office MELBOURNE
Production on 27 JANUARY – 8 MARCH 1998

PRINCIPAL CREDITS

Director BEN KOSTER
Producers SALIK SILVERSTEIN, DAVID THURBAUM
Line producer MURRAY SHISTAR
Executive producer BILL LEWISK
Screenplay BEN KOSTER
Director of photography LASZLO KARANTAI
Production designer GRAHAM BLACKMITRE
Editor VIBETT SOUTHWIRK
Composer ALAN ZAVOD
Sound designer TRAHEY SILVERS
Production manager MURRAY SESTAR
Art director JULIAN FAULL

POST PRODUCTION

Film gauge 35MM
Length 100 MINS
Finance PRIVATE

CAST

WILLIAM SNOW, VICTORIA HILL, PETER HARDY, MICHAEL EDWARD STEVENS

A contemporary Hitchcockian thriller.

ERSKINEVILLE KINGS

Production company UNDERGROUND FILMS
Production office SYDNEY
Budget $750 000
Production 28 JANUARY – 24 FEBRUARY

PRINCIPAL CREDITS

DIRECTOR ALAN WHITE
Producers ANNETTE SIMONS, JULIO CANO
Screenwriters ALAN WHITE, ANDY CROONEY
Director of photography JOHN SWAFFIELD
Production designer ANDREW HOBBS
Editor JANE MORAN

CAST

MARTY DENNIS, HUGH JACKMAN, LEAH VANDENBERG, JOEL EDMONTON, AARON BLABEY, ANDREW WHITELEY

Two brothers reconcile following the death of their father.

FIFTEEN AMORE

Production company MYXM MOVIES
Production office SYDNEY, MELBOURNE
Budget $450,000
Production 2 – 21 FEBRUARY 1998

PRINCIPAL CREDITS

Director MAURIHI MURPHY
Producer BARBARA WILSON
Executive producer MAURIHI MURPHY
Co-producer MAURICH MURPHY
Director of photography JOHN BUCHIK
Production designer EMMA HAMILTON LAWES
Editor DANA HUGHES
Composer CAMILO GARRO
Production manager BIRGITTE WILSTON
Art director JULIA HUSKIN

POST PRODUCTION

Film gauge 35MM
Length 90 MINS
Finance PRIVATE

CAST

LIRA HENSLEY, STEVE BASTONI, TARA JAKSEWICZ, DIMINIH GALATI, GIRTRAUD INTHEROPS

Based on the true story of a romance between an Australian mother of three and an Italian POW set in the final years of WWII

GARGANTUAN

MOVIE OF THE WEEK FOR TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX
Budget MORE THAN US$7 MILLION
Pre-production 2/11/97
Production FOR SHOT MARCH 1998
Locations MT TAMBORINE, MABBI MARINA, JACOBS WELL, WARNER BROS ROADSHOW STUDIOS, QUEENSLAND

PRINCIPAL CREDITS

Director BRANDON MAT
Producer PETER WARE
Screenwriter RON PARKER
Director of photography JOHN STOKES
Visual effects JOHN COX

CAST

ADAM BALDWIN, EMILY HIRSCH, MAINLY AMERICAN WITH AUSTRALIAN EXTRAS

A widowed marine biologist and his son arrive on a remote tropical island to study reef activity and the effect on marine life and in the process meet a famous Australian geologist. Because of the seismic activity, things that live in the water decide to name not.

HEAD ON

Production company HEAD ON PRODUCTIONS, PTY LTD
Production office MELBOURNE
Production 20/8 – 18/10/97
Location MELBOURNE

PRINCIPAL CREDITS

Director ANA KOKKINOS
Producer JANE SCOTT
Screenwriters ANDREW BOVELL, ANA KOKKINOS, MIRA ROBERTSON
Director of photography JAMES GRANT
Production designer NICKI DI FALCO
Costume designer ANNA BORGHES
Editor JILL BILCOCK
Composer PETER BEST
Sound designer LUCIO CABUNK

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Casting director LUCY DALE MANN
Extras casting CAMERON HARRIS

PRODUCTION CREW

Production manager CATHRINE BISHOP
Production co-ordinator KIM TRATTS
Producer's assistant CHRISTINE NORMAN
Production secretary JANA BLAIR
Location managers ALISTAIR REILLY, TIM SCOTT
Unit manager ANDY PAPPAS
Unit assistant NINO NHOLI
Production runner KIM REED
Production accountant GINA HALLAS
Insurer H W WOOD
Travel TRAVEL TOO

CAMERA CREW

Focus puller PETER STOTT
Gaffer JIM HUNT
Best boy REGGIE HIRRHIGERER
Electricians DAVE LOVELL, CHRIS DEWHURST

ON SET CREW

1st assistant director PIL JONES
2nd assistant director CHRISTINA ROBINSON
3rd assistant director SARAH PRIEST
Script supervisor ANNE WHINT
Boom swinger MAL HUGHES
Make-up/hair supervisor CHRISTINE MILLER
Choreographer ZOIS TZITAH
Greek music co-ordinator IRENE VELA
Still photographer JOHN SARVIS
Unit publicist FRAN LANIGAN
Catering EAT YOUR HEART OUT FILM CATERING
Catering assistant ROBIE BYGRAVE

ART DEPARTMENT

Art director PAUL HEATH
Art department co-ordinator COLETTE BARELL
Art department runner ADAM MCGILDERICK
Buyers/researchers LISA THOMPSON, MURRAY KELLY
Standby props SIMON CARTER

WARDROBE

Wardrobe supervisor KERYN KERRANDS
Standby wardrobe KELLY FIREMAN
Wardrobe assistant SHANE PHILLIPS
Pool production
Stills assistant editor ROBYNNE OSHLACK
Building artist CRAIG CARTER
Sound editor ROBIN WHITE & VIC

CRANE CASTER

Make-up SPINNIGRAM
Laboratory CINEVEX
Camera equipment LEMAH
Shooting stock KODAK

COMPUTER GRAPHICS

Dubbing house TRI SONIC
Sound editor ROBIN WHITE & VIC

CRANE CASTER

Make-up SPINNIGRAM
Laboratory CINEVEX
Camera equipment LEMAH
Shooting stock KODAK

COMPUTER GRAPHICS

Dubbing house TRI SONIC
Sound editor ROBIN WHITE & VIC

POST PRODUCTION

Film gauge 35MM
Length 90 MINS
Finance PRIVATE

CAST

LIRA HENSLEY, STEVE BASTONI, TARA JAKSEWICZ, DIMINIH GALATI, GIRTRAUD INTHEROPS

Based on the true story of a romance between an Australian mother of three and an Italian POW set in the final years of WWII

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Producer PETER WARE
Screenwriter RON PARKER
Director of photography JOHN STOKES
Visual effects JOHN COX

CAST

ADAM BALDWIN, EMILY HIRSCH, MAINLY AMERICAN WITH AUSTRALIAN EXTRAS

A widowed marine biologist and his son arrive on a remote tropical island to study reef activity and the effect on marine life and in the process meet a famous Australian geologist. Because of the seismic activity, things that live in the water decide to name not.

HEAD ON

Production company HEAD ON PRODUCTIONS, PTY LTD
Production office MELBOURNE
Production 20/8 – 18/10/97
Location MELBOURNE

PRINCIPAL CREDITS

Director ANA KOKKINOS
Producer JANE SCOTT
Screenwriters ANDREW BOVELL, ANA KOKKINOS, MIRA ROBERTSON
Director of photography JAMES GRANT
Production designer NICKI DI FALCO
Costume designer ANNA BORGHES
Editor JILL BILCOCK
Composer PETER BEST
Sound designer LUCIO CABUNK

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Casting director LUCY DALE MANN
Extras casting CAMERON HARRIS

PRODUCTION CREW

Production manager CATHRINE BISHOP
Production co-ordinator KIM TRATTS
Producer's assistant CHRISTINE NORMAN
Production secretary JANA BLAIR
Location managers ALISTAIR REILLY, TIM SCOTT
Unit manager ANDY PAPPAS
Unit assistant NINO NHOLI
Production runner KIM REED
Production accountant GINA HALLAS
Insurer H W WOOD
Travel TRAVEL TOO

CAMERA CREW

Focus puller PETER STOTT
Gaffer JIM HUNT
Best boy REGGIE HIRRHIGERER
Electricians DAVE LOVELL, CHRIS DEWHURST

ON SET CREW

1st assistant director BOB HOWARD
2nd assistant director
STEVE HARRIGAN
Continuity JULIE HATTH-BRENNAN
Boom operator GREGGY NUHI-FIRA
Make up/hair designer ANDREA CARZOW
Make-up/hair JOHN HER LAMPKIN
Special fx co-ordinator PETER STUBBS
Stunts co-ordinator WALLY DALTON
Safety supervisor PATRIK CULPAN
Safety expert PETER CULPAN
Security TIM MURRAY
Still photography LISA TOMARETT
Unit publicist FRAN LANIGAN
Catering KEITH FISH, YVETT SINL
Runners JEHLYN MCCANDIN, MATTHEW SAVILLE, SAMUEL AUSTIN

ART DEPARTMENT

Art director PAULIE BUSTIN
Art department co-ordinator MARIAN LONG
Art department DANIEL OWEN
Art department assistant DIRARO KELLY
Set dressers MARITA MUSSETT, COLIN ROBERTSON
Standby props BEN BADEN
Animator JOHN FOA

WARDROBE

Wardrobe buyer CATHRINE HERREEN
Standby wardrobe KARIN FALTINS

CONSTRUCTION DEPARTMENT

Scenic artist COLIN BURCHALL
Construction manager DAVE FRANKS
Key carpenter MIKE GUTSTHOENKO
Carpenters ANTHONY LAMONT, MATHEW BURGESS, GILBERT HANSON

REST BRODUCTION

Post production manager MAI BRITNING
Assistant editor BARRY LANFRANKHI
Laboratory CINEVEX
Shooting stock KODAK
Dubbing house TRI SONIC
Length 95MIN
Gauge 35MM

GOVERNMENT AGENCY INVESTMENT

Finance FILM FINANCE CORPORATION (FFC)

OTHER INVESTMENT

Production PREMIUM MOVIE PARTNERSHIP (PMP)
Distribution TOTAL FILM AND TELEVISION MAYFAIR ENTERTAINMENT

CAST

MARTIN COSKAS (ROGUL)
TUHINKA BERGEN (JULIA)

Though the shimmering red ochre distance in the white-hot light of passion, two lovers create their own reality. *Hurrah* is a mysterious intense love story

JAMES

Production company THE JAMES GANG PTY LTD
Distribution company BEYOND FILMS
REP DISTRIBUTION
Pre-production 10/11/97 – 15/1/98
Production 16/1 – 12/3/98
Post-production 16/3 – 28/8/98

PRINCIPAL CREDITS

Director LYNDA HITTS
Producers MAUREEN BERGS, SHARON KRUGER, ROSS MATTHEW
Screenwriter STUART BHATTUH
Director of photography MARK N MCGRATH
Production designer LUCIO PITTORINO
Costume designer ANNIE MARSHALL
Editor JOHN SCOTT
Composer NEIDA TYRIN CHEW
Sound designer GRANTS SCOTT

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Casting FAILA MARLIN & AIRHOHATES
Extras casting KATE FUNSTERHIE
Storyboard artist DAVID RUSSELL
Shooting schedule by ADRIAN BICKERSOLL

PRODUCTION CREW

Production manager PHINY STARLETON
Production co-ordinator RUTH WATSON
Production secretary VANESSA CATHELEY
Location manager ANTON DINOBT
Unit manager RIKK KORNAAT
Production runner SCOTT LOVELOCK
Production accountant SOPHIA SIMPS
Insurer H W WOOD

inproduction

Production Survey

continued

Completion guarantor FACB
Legal services ROTH WARNEN
Travel co-ordinator STAGH & SCREEN
Freight co-ordinator STAGH & SCREEN

CAMERA CREW

Focus puller KATE HA CROCH
Clapper loader SIMON WILLIAMS
Key grip RHETT MACDOWELL

ON SET CREW

1st assistant director ADELAN PICKERSGILL
2nd assistant director GUY CAMPBELL
3rd assistant director DOROTHY ELLERINGTON
Continuity LYNN MARIE DANZEY
Boom operator DAVID PHABSON
Make up supervisor JAN "Z GHT" ZEISHNIBH
Chreographer PAUL MERCURIO
Still photography SIK H WATKINS
Catering EAT ANT SHIFT THROUGH

ART DEPARTMENT

Art director CATHRINE MANHILL
Art department co-ordinator ALISH LIDEY
Art department runner BEN SIN NHIE
Set dresser #1 JULIET JOHN
Set dresser #2 PETE BAXTER
Assistant set dresser KATH BURNTON
Standby props JEHN KUNE
Storyboard artist BEN SKINNER

WARDROBE

Wardrobe supervisor ROBYN ELLIOTT
Standby wardrobe AMANDA CRAZIE
Wardrobe assistant LISA JATELIN

POST-PRODUCTION

Recording studio ALAN EATCH STUDIOS
Laboratory ATLAS
Laboratory film sort IAN NUSSULL
Negative matching NHITHUNH
Screen ratio 13.1
Stock KODAK

GOVERNMENT AGENCY INVESTMENT

Development FILM VICTORIA
Production FFC-NSWFTO

MARKETING

International sales agent BEYONDE FILMS

CAST

RHOSHLL PAGE (JAMIE) REBECCA YATES (CLAIRE) MARTIN HENTHASON (TIM) PAUL MERNHIBLO (DAVID KNIGHT) RADKA MITHILL (TAMARA) PETER GWYNNH (DR DERNIHH) PHILLIP HOLDER (MR PEWSEY) GEOFFH SHARTELS (JACK GRANT) KIP GAMBLIN (NELANN) RAY MAYO (DANILA)

James is the comic story of a young rugby nerd who leads a secret double life as a ballet dancer

MR PUMPKIN S BIG NIGHT OUT

Production company SPY PRODUCTIONS
Pre-production 15/9/97 – 23/10/97
Production 24/10/97 – 22/11/97
Post-production 24/11/97 – 23/1/98

PRINCIPAL CREDITS

Directors MICHELLE WARNER & PHISH LIA CAMERON
Producers MICHELLH WARNEH & PHISC LIA CAMERON
Associate producer KATHARINE KEIL
Scriptwriters MIHHLLH WARNER & PHISHLLA CAMERON
Director of photography GRANT MASHERT
Production designer LAURA ELK NGTON
Costume designer AUBHOLE MCAPLINH
Editor RAT COBBER
Sound recordist GRAEMH H CKS

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Script editor
MERIAN SIMBSON HUBERMAN
Casting DAMSIN ANTHONY ROSSI
Casting consultants LTE ABB & ROSS CASTING CONSULTANTS
Extras casting
LTILARO & ROSS CASTING CONSULTANTS
Shooting schedule by
ANGHLLA MCPHERSON

Budgeted by
PRSCILLA CAMERON

PRODUCTION CREW

Production manager CATH HALL
Production assistants KIM PRENTHH & CATHY FRASER
Production runner SARAH NELLER
Insurer CINNIBHH
Legal services NRR CONSULTANTS

CAMERA CREW

Camera operator GRANT MANKERT
Focus puller MARKARET MHCLYMENT
Clapper loader RCKH BTENH
Camera assistant
MARGARET MHCLYMENT
Camera type ARRI-SR2
Key grip LEHH TATE
Assistant grips TONY O'LOUGHLAN
Gaffer DAN M HHAUS
Best boy M CHAEL BAKER

ON-SET CREW

1st assistant director
ANGELLA MHPHHSON
2nd assistant director KIM PHENT CE
Continuity KATHAH NA KEIL
Photographer GREG STEELE
Make-up SUH KELLY TATE
Make-up assistant SUH KENNHINGTON
Hairdresser SUH KELLY TATE
Still photography VINCENT LONE & TONY D LEUHHLAN
Catering ANN CAMERON & NANKLLE WALSH

ART DEHARTMENT

Art director LAHEA ELKINHTON
Art department runner SALLY BRINLE
Set dresser CASH O DENNELL
Prop maker ADAMA HOUS MILHS ELOW

POST-PRODUCTION

Assistant editor KA MOHRHINZ
Edge numbers ATLAS
Sound transfers by ATLAS
Laboratory ATLAS
Laboratory liaison SIMON STUNEY
Negative matching CHRIS ROWALL
Film gauge SUPER 16
Shooting stock KODAH

GOVERNMENT AGENCY INVESTMENT

Development FILM QUEENSLAND
Production PRIVATH

CAST

SARA ZANHEHAN (DHIDHI) MHLINDA EUTHL (LOU) ANT GRAT (JO) PAHL TASSONE (DAN) ANDREW BROTH (MR PUMPH N) DANNY MHMPSY (CHAIN) FRANHSE CHANG (LESTER) GRANT EBELING (POLHEMAN)

THESE girls are pumpkin more fun than you HEH pake a stick et.

POWDER BURN

Production company ERIN STREET FILMS
Budget $1.3M
Production 21/1/98 –

PRINCIPAL CREDITS

Director STEPHEN PRIMH
Producer TIM N CHOLLS
Co-producer GREG REA
Line producer GILL AN PHILLIPS
Executive producers STEPHEN PRIME, JAMES ROBERTS
Scriptwriter STEPHEN PRIMH
Editor JAMES ROBERTS
Art director TIM NIHHOLLS
Casting SALLY BA STOH
1st assistant director GREH READ

CAST

TIM KHANNHHED

Powder Burn is a character-driven potboiler about three streetwise 20-something who live outside society's rules It's an energetic off beat film where everything happens on the run – and happens fast.

PRAISE

Production company EMCEH FILMS
Distribution company
THE GLOBE FILM CO SOUTHERN STAR SALES
Production 1st JANUARY – 2 MARHH

PRINHIPAL CREDITS

Director JOHN CUSSAN
Producer MARTHA COLEMAN
Line producer HILEN WATTS
Scriptwriter ANGRHW MCGAHAN
Director of photography DIAN REEDH
Production designer MIHAEL PHILLIPS
Costume designer EMILY SHRESIN
Editor ALEXANDRH DH FRANHSSHHL
Sound recordist PHIL THENH

PRODUCTION CREW

Production manager SUH MACKAY

CAMERA CREW

Gaffer PAUL ROBTH

ON-SET CREW

1st assistant director JAM H CROOKS
Make-up/Hair PAHL PATT-SON
Still photography PHIL P LE MHSURIER
Unit publicists TRACHT MAIR JANE OSSOBHH

ART DHHARTMENT

Art director ANNH READHAMH

GOVERNMENT AGENCY INVESTMENT

Development FFC NSWFTO AFC

MARKETING

International sales agent SOUTHERN STAR SALES

CAST

PETER FINTIN SACHA HEPLER JTEL EDGERTON YVETTE DUNCAN WINSTON BULL MARTA DUZELDORF GREGORY "TEX" PERKINS

THE confession of a young man with a little penis and a lazy libido who meets a girl with an insatiable sexual appetite

SPANK

Production company ULTRA FILMS PTY LTD
Distribution company PALACH CINEMAS EXT CORPORATION
Pre-production 24/11/97 – 2/1/98
Production 5/1-10/2/98

PRINCIPAL CREDITS

Director ERNJI CLABH
Producer DAVID LITVINOFF
Co-producer SCOTT MHDONALD
Executive producer NEILH HHEN AND DOMENHIC PRIHACCI
Scriptwriters DATIH FARRELL & DAVID LIHHTENTH
Director of photography DAVIH FORHMAN A.C.S.
Production designer ARHRSTH KONTOS
Editor THE MHQUEEN MASIN
Composer SEAN TIMMH
Sound recordist DHS KHNEALLY

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Casting director DHHCAN THOMPSTN
Casting ACTORS INK
Casting director ANHELA HHESOM

PRODUCTION CREW

Production manager SCOTT MHDONALD
Production co-ordinator LEHNA C HHON
Location manager NATINH SCHOEN
Unit manager JOHN FAIRBHAH
Production assistant CLAIR PARHER
Product on runner ANNA STEEL
Financial controller FACB
Production accountant TEHDY TALBOT
Insurer WEBHER HTOH HHATH
Completion guarantor FACB
Legal services ROTH WARNEN
Freight co-ordinator AUSTRALIAN AIR EXPRESS

CAMERA CREW

Focus puller RAGS PHILLIPOT
Clapper loader SUNNY WILSONO
Steadicam photography
HAPHT PANAB OTLUH
Key grip MARHUS ROBISTH
Gaffer GRAEMH SHELTON
Best boy DAVE SMTH

ON-SET CREW

1st assistant director DAVID LIENTHEST
2nd assistant director JULH BYRNH
3rd assistant director CLA R PARHER
Continuity TEHRY GARDENHR
Boom operator RIH CHTHER
Make up SUZY WARHURST
Make-up assistant JEDHE LEMANH SMTH
Unit nurse MICHHLH MHGOWAN

ART DEPARTMENT

Art director PH L MEHHERSON
Prop buyer PERS A RRHENSHA
Standby prop RORIN LAMEY

WARDROBE

Wardrobe supervisor
DWENHLYN "JACH" STRHHLT
Standby wardrobe MELLY D GRADT
HANKAHAN
Wardrobe assistant KAR H VON BREKNEN

POST PRODUCTION

Post production supervisor
TEO MCQUEEN MASIN
Assistant editor ADE AN MCQUEEN MASIN
Laboratory GENEVEX
Laboratory liaison IAN ANTHRSON
Video transfer by AAV

GOVERNMENT AGENHT INTESTMENT

Development SA FILM COORDINATION
Production FFC and SAFC

OTHER INVESTMENT

Production PREMIUM MOV H PRATNERSHPH (PMP)

MARKETING

International sales agent INTRA FILM ,NEMH
Publicity DAV D FARRELL
Poster designer ROBYN WATT

CAST

ROBERT MAMMONE (PAULIE) VINCE POLETTO (ROHKY) MARIO GAMMA (NICK) CHHCO MHSSULINO (VINHY) VHTORIA D XON WHITTLE (JJ) LUHIA MASTRON TONE (TINA) MARCO VENTURIN (ANG)

PAULIE returns from Italy to find his old mates Nick and Vinny planning to set up a hole in the city's premier cafe strip. Vinny's profit and Tina bankrolls the plans, but they HAN'T find a building. Enter local dish kid Rocky Fisson temporarily in charge of his Pa s building development company Rocky takes over the project with disastrous HONSEQUENCES.

THE THIN RED LINE

Production company
PHOENIX PICTURES FIX 2000
Production 23 JUNH-NOVEMBH 1997
FIRT DEUALLAS QUEENSLAND
Distributing company
TWENT ETH CENTHRY FOH

PRINCIPAL HEDDHS

Director TERRENHH MALIHH
Producers DRANT HILL, ROBERT GRISLER, JOHN ROBERDEAU
Executive producer GEORGH STEVENS JR
Line producer GRANT HILL
Scriptwriter TERRENHH MALIHH
Based on a novel by *THE THIN RED LINE* By JAMES JONES
Director of photography JOHN TELL
Editors B LL WHIER, LESLH JONES
Production designer JASH FITH
Costume designer MARGOT WILSON

OTHER CREDITS

Production manager V CKI FEPPLEWELL
1st assistant director SKIE COSBER
Unit publicity FIONA SEARSON, DDA

CAST

SEAN PINH JOHN TRAVOLTA, J M CAVEZEL, ADRHN BRODY ELAS KOTEAS NICK NOLTE BEN CHAPLIN JEN COSACK, WEDDY HARRISSON B LL PHLMAN JEHN SAVAGE, GARY DLOMAN GEORGE CLOONEY MIRAHTA OTTO PAUL GIERSON

Based on Jones sequel to *From Here to Eternity* the film depicts an episode of military history in 1942 when the first divisions of the US Marine Corps attacked the beachhead of Guadalcanal, where Japanese troops had dug in The thin red line represents the fine line between defeat and victory in the battle

Shorts

STRUCTURES ON RAIL

Production company FUTHRIST FILMS
Budget $20 000

PRINCIPAL CREWTS

Director GLEN EAVES
Producer GLEN EAVES
Scriptwriter GLEN EAVES
Directors of photography ANTHONT BRAMHILL, GLEN EATES, ANTHONT JENNINGS
Editor GLEH EAVES
Composer DAV D RITHAT MORGAN
Sound recordists AHGEW C HUGH, ANTHONT FRHLNA

PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

Shooting schedule by GLHN EATES
Budgeted by GLEN EATES

CAMERA CREW

Camera operators ANTHONT JHNN NGS ANTHONY BRAMHILL, GLEN EAVES

POST-PRODUCTION

Sound edit TEAR HALL STUDIOS
Music performed by WESTERN AUSTRALIAN YOUTH ORCHESTRA
Recording studio W.A ACADEMT OF PERFORMINH ARTS
Mixed at FILM & TELEVISION INSTITUTE W.A.
Opticals DFILM
Titles APW N DES IGN/OPTICAL AND GRAPH C
Laboratory ATLAS/FUMILUS
Negative matching CHRIS ROWELL
Grader ATLAS
Film gauge 16MM
Shooting stock KODAK 7222
Video transfers by VIDEO 8 CHANNEL 7 SYDNEY
DII-ma facilities MURDOCH UNIVERSITY

GOVERNMENT AHENCY INVESTMENT

Development NSWFTO
Production NSWFTO

An artistic representation of the birth life and death of trees. Their presence and animation during the construction process the aesthetics of machines and their operations the balance of movement and the visual parallels of the human and nature Structures on Rail explores.

Awaiting Release

SEE ISSUE 122 FOR THE FOLLOWING

AMY
DEAD LETTER OFFICE
CRACKERS (FORMERLY FAM LY CRACKERS)
VENUS FACTORY
TRUTH ABOUT TARO (116)
SUGAR FACTORY (116)
REDBALL (119)
PIGEON (119)
GREYSTOKE 2 (119)
JUSTICE (121)
IN THE WINTER DARK (123)

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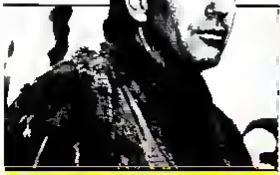
DIRTY DOZEN

A panel of 12 film [illegible] reviewers have rated a whole [illegible] of the latest releases on a scale of 0 to 10, the latter being the optimum rating (in a handful [illegible] not seen)



THE DIRTY DOZEN	PETER CASTALDI [illegible]	BILL COLLINS [illegible]	SANDRA HALL [illegible]	PAUL HARRIS The Canberra Times / The Age	TIM HUNTER [illegible]	STAN JAMES The Sydney Morning Herald	ADRIAN MARTIN [illegible]	LEIGH PAATSCH [illegible]	TOM RYAN The Sydney Age	JIM SCHEMBRI [illegible]	DAVID STRATTON [illegible]	EVAN WILLIAMS The Courier-Mail	[illegible]
AMISTAD *Steven Spielberg*	5	8	–	–	5	7	–	5	5	1	5	7	5.1
AS GOOD AS IT GETS *James L. Brooks*	8	9	8	5	8	9	9	8	9	7.5	7	8	7.8
BOOGIE NIGHTS *Paul Thomas Anderson*	8	8	7	8	7	7	5	9	4	9	9	–	7
DEVIL'S ADVOCATE *Taylor Hackford*	7	8	–	2	4	5	–	1	8	8	8	7	5.2
THE END OF VIOLENCE *Wim Wenders*	4	–	5	7	7	8	8	2	5	3	3	–	5
JOHN GRISHAM'S THE RAINMAKER *Francis Ford Coppola*	8	7	8	5	4	8	5	5	–	4	7	–	5.5
MA VIE EN ROSE (MY LIFE IN PINK) *Alain Berliner*	–	9	8	2	4	–	5	8	7	8	8	8	5.9
LA MÉPRISE (CONTEMPT) *Jean-Luc Godard*	10	9	7	10	8	–	10	8	8	5	9	9	8.5
MOUSE HUNT *Gore Verbinski*	7	7	5	6	7	7	8	9	7	8	5	–	8.5
OSCAR AND LUCINDA *Gillian Armstrong*	9	7	–	5	8	7	5	5	5	5	8	7	5.5
THE POSTMAN *Kevin Costner*	5	5	5	2	0	5	–	1	–	4	1	5	5.1
THE WINGS OF THE DOVE *Iain Softley*	–	7	9	8	8	8	7	7	9	7.5	7	9	7.7

The new print of *Le Mépris* is not treated with contempt this month with a 5 – further proof, if it were needed, that Godard is skill[illegible] God. Apply Kevin Costner delivers Godard's opposite number with his tedious new letterbomb *The Postman*, scoring a lowly 3.1. It's good to see a couple of new films attaining decent scores: both *As Good as It Gets* and *The Wings of the Dove* found much favour. They didn't quite get past last month's winner, *The Ice Storm*, which scored 7.9, but what's a point or two between films? And a number of stalwart directors (Wenders, Coppola and Spielberg) seem to have lost their zing with their latest offerings all scoring in the low 5s.

SPOTLIGHT: A contempt for bottoms

When distributors first tried to release *Le Mépris* in Australia it was BANNED. The distributors then did the inexcusable and cut the film brutally to get a release. The widest cuts of the naked Camille (Brigitte Bardot) in the "Do you like my bottom?" sequence were excised, as was the nude moments of montage during the scene where Camille reflects on the couch in a red wrap. Yet also in the scene on the roof where a paperback makes up for Camille's bikini bottom. As for poor Fritz Lang's epic within an epic, it was so mutilated that when Jeremy Prokosh (Jack Palance) says how rude the rushes are we could only assume he's gone delusional.

To top it all, the film was dubbed into English, which meant the translator Francesca (Georgia Moll) had nothing to do so the dubbers invented some of the most rubbishy dialogue in the history of cinema to cover her mouth movements.

Even in that form, *Le Mépris* was one of the great es movies ever made, this mill on dollar love letter from Godard to his former wife. Now it is pure bliss.

S M

blade

fairytale - a true story

the borrowers

mimic

lego dragon

fear and loathing

lost in space

citroën saxo devil

titanic

mortal kombat

cointreau journey

braveheart

saving private ryan

george michael. jesus to a child

dr doolittle

the fifth element

guinness.chain

gulliver s travels

the odyssey

ford menage

dante s peak

my favourite martian

saab unique

babe in metropolis

the governess

adidas. the difference

the city of lost children

face/off

muller light staircase

oasis. do you know what i mean

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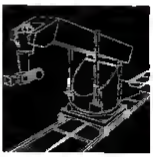

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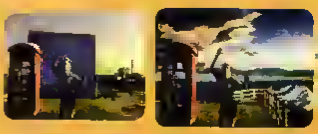

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